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Flashback
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PLUS: guide to war games

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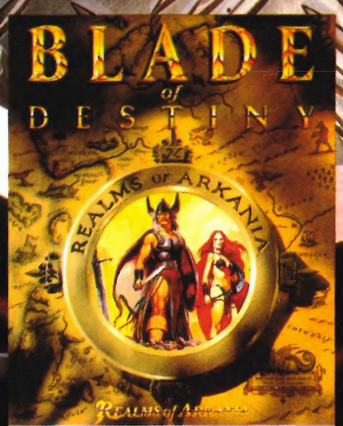
PC review

Over 60 new games previewed

ISSUE 22 AUGUST 1993



REALMS OF ARKANIA, VOL. 1

Blade of Destiny, from the 'Realms of Arkania' world is based on Germany's most successful role-playing series and has a myriad of features that make this RPG one massive challenge.

Over 400 hours of gameplay.

Stunning graphics.

- 2 levels of difficulty, which really do cater for both novice and expert RPG gamers alike.
- 12 different races, inhabiting over 50 towns and villages.

Available on:

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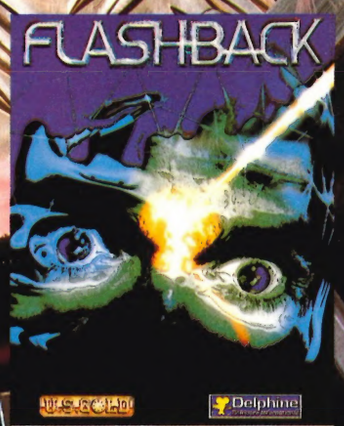

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Flashback breaks new ground in computer games excitement and intrigue.

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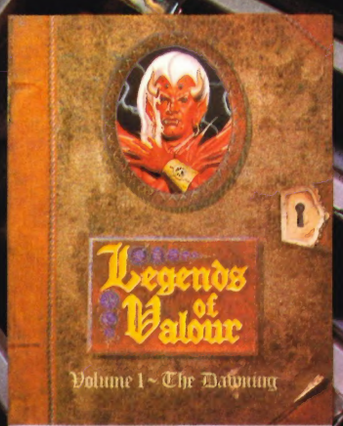

ROLE-PLAYING FANTASY AT ITS MOST REAL...

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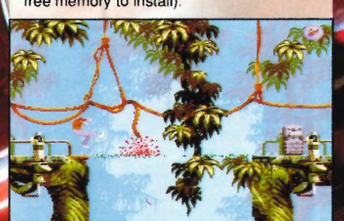

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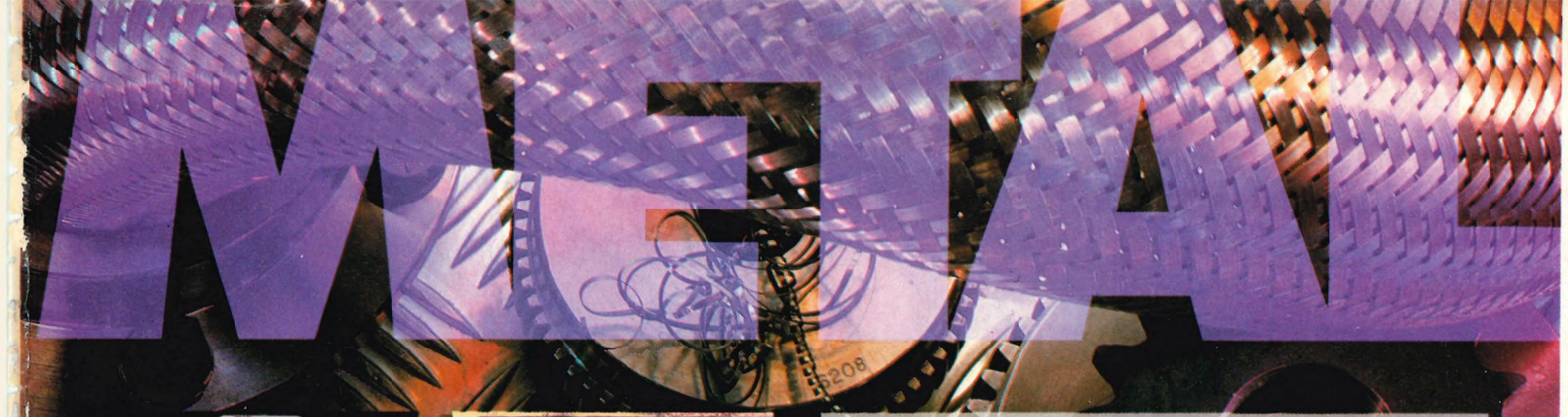
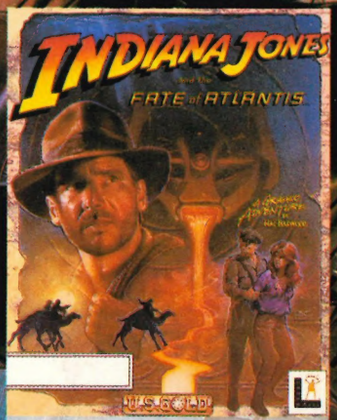


NEW GENERATION COMBAT SIMULATOR

Climb into the cockpit of an X-Wing Starfighter and battle for freedom. The galaxy is being plundered by the Dark Side, and you are desperately needed by the Rebel Alliance. Take the controls of the X-Wing Starfighter - now! Experience the incredible realism of polygon graphics and bit-mapped special effects as you fly against deadly TIE Fighters and menacing Star Destroyers. Be swept along by the interactive musical score and digitized Star Wars movie sound effects. At last, a new generation of space combat technology to challenge the evil Empire. Destroy the Emperor's ultimate weapon and end his tyranny.

Available on:

PC & Compatibles (MCGA, VGA, minimum memory required 640k and High Density Disk Drive required. Supports AdLib™ SoundBlaster, ProAudio Spectrum and Roland. Dos 3.1 or higher).



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Action only.

Atari ST, Amstrad (128k only) & C64 cassette & disk, Spectrum (128k only) cassette.

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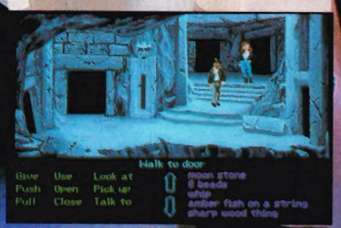

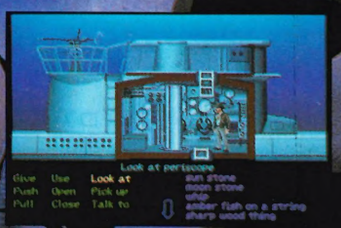

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PCreview

AUGUST 1993 ISSUE 22

Printed in the UK

SPECIAL REPORT

THE FUTURE STARTS HERE

The Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago is the world's prime showcase for all the PC games which will be released between now and the end of the year. Christine Erskine was there, and brings back this special report on the games to look out for this autumn

SPECIAL REPORT

The Dig

Lucasarts

Release date TBA

Stonekeep

Interplay Productions

Due out in October

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Take advantage of our exclusive discount on Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe.

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The future starts here

Over 60 never-seen-before PC games in our special preview report from the giant Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago.

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Win a CD-ROM drive — and we'll throw in a Porsche as well.

36 **Games without frontiers**

Simon Shaw explains why war games needn't be dull, and picks some personal favourites from this much misunderstood genre.

42 **Upgrading your PC**

Choosing effective anti-virus software: plus a comprehensive buyers' guide to both commercial and shareware protection programs.

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QED

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contents

8 COVER DISK

Take to the skies in this one-plane extract from Air Warrior — and take on your friends as well, via modem. Then it's back down to earth for some deep strategy with Ambush at Sorinor, a fully playable demo from Empire's game. Only then can you relax with a round of Turbo Speed Ball, a complete shareware game. 5.25" disk users will find the complete Ambush demo on the cover disks.

Turn straight to page 8 for full details on installing and using your cover disks.

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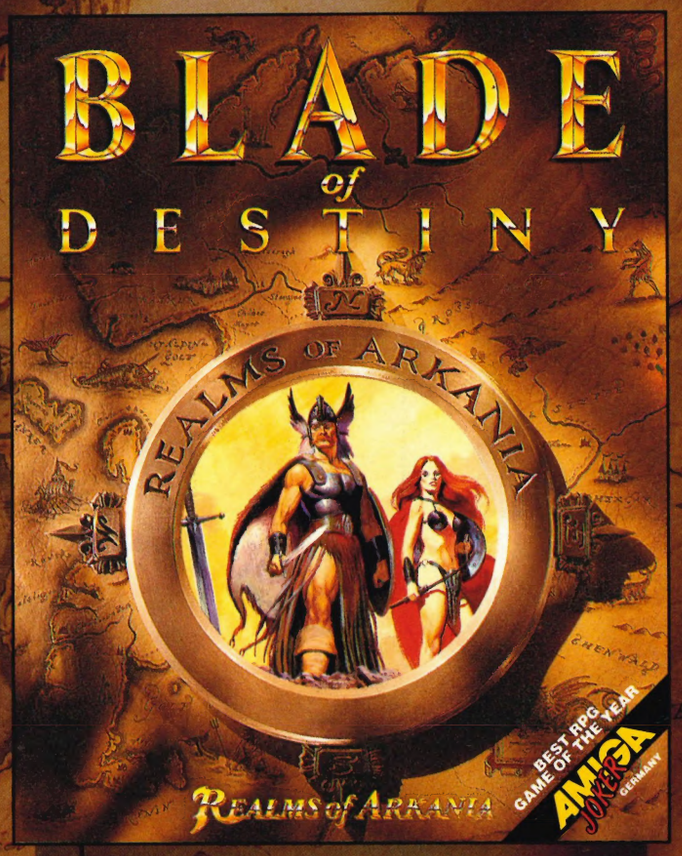
130 **Classic Game of the Month**

Welcome to the Realms of Arkania
The First Quest

BLADE...

Cut loose in a world of blazing adventure. Blade of Destiny is a vast game, which can be played at one of two difficulty levels. For the less-experienced role-player there is the two-screen mode, allowing you to get on with the action fast while the computer handles all the detailed work on skill values and spells. For the dedicated veteran, there is twenty-screen mode. Using this you can control all aspects of your character.

- *6 Player Characters, chosen from an almost infinite list of possibilities.*
- *12 Character Archetypes (including Warrior, Jester, Dwarf, Druid, Ice Elf...)*
- *13 Attributes (from Courage, Strength and Dexterity to Superstition and Avarice...)*



PC VGA 256

PC VGA 256

AMIGA

AMIGA

AVAILABLE ON: CBM AMIGA (MINIMUM MEMORY REQUIRED 1MB, HARD DRIVE REQUIRES 1.5MB), PC & COMPATIBLES (VGA, MINIMUM MEMORY REQUIRED 640K, 286 OR BETTER. SONIC SUPPORTS; ALL MAJOR SOUNDCARDS. SEE PACKAGING FOR DETAILS).

DESTINY...

This is the game you have been waiting for. Explore a continent the size of Europe, richly detailed and studded with towns, dungeons and other adventure opportunities! Your heroes face many hazardous journeys by road and ship as they explore the fantastic realms and cities of Arkania. Your heroic characters must track down every lead and find every contact if they are to succeed in their search for Grimring, the Blade of Destiny!

- *Full forward-view & 3-D movement.*
- *Town & dungeon automapping.*
- *Auto-combat option.*
- *12 Magic Lores.*
- *Over 50 skills.*
- *Over 50 weapons.*
- *Over 20 different monster types.*
- *Over 400 hours of epic gameplay.*

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Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computer's specifications.

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PC review

AUGUST 1993 ISSUE 22

Christina Erskine
Christina spent ten days in the US, visiting Chicago's Consumer Electronics Show to bring back our special report on page 25 (that's her excuse, anyway ...). Back in Blighty, she took Wycombe Wanderers to the heights of the Premier League in Premier Manager (page 68).

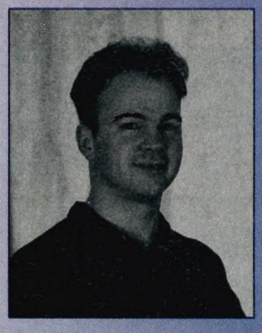
John Bennett
After running, jumping and dangling with Prince of Persia last month, John has been tackling more gymnastics with Flashback (page 60), for this issue. And feeding his Sensible Soccer habit, of course — never can a game have been quite so extensively play-tested as this one!

Cal Jones
The adventuress par excellence has been testing her capitalist mettle in Rags to Riches (page 74) and her detection skills on Blue Force (page 64). Rather uncharacteristically, we thought, she also leapt at the chance to review Beauty and the Beast (page 72).

Dean Evans
Not only did Dean take Digital Integration's Tornado for an extensive flight-test this month (page 50), he also beat Christina in the race to take Wycombe Wanderers into the Premier League first, but then, he is a bona fide Wycombe supporter.

Paul Boughton
PC Review's answer to Jacques Delors, when he isn't modelling leather jackets on the news pages, coordinates the smooth running of our overseas editions. He now knows how to swear effectively in four European languages.

Steve Cooke
Games guru Steve Cooke joins PC Review as a columnist this month. With 10 years experience of both games-playing and designing, Steve casts his own, very individual, eye over the development and future of PC games.



Mark Edwards
War is hell, especially when you've been coerced into including that picture of a horse's rear end in Simon Shaw's critique of war games (page 36). Mark has also been working on the new look for this month's news pages.

Becky Willis
As joint art editor, Becky has the unenviable task of turning the editorial team's prose into attractively designed pages, a job made less than easy by the editor's idea of suitable pictures to use in this month's cover story.

ISSUE 22 *August 1993*

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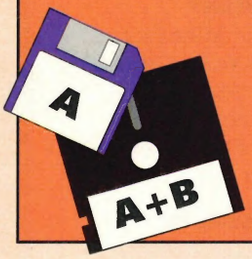
COVER DISKS

On this month's cover disk we have Ambush at Sorinor, an exclusive playable demo with four complete levels for you to try, on both disk formats. On 3.5" disks only, Air Warrior puts you in the cockpit of a Spitfire, with the chance to fly against live opponents if you have a modem. And Turbo Speed Ball brings Breakout-style action to your PC.

Ambush at Sorinor

3.5" and 5.25" disks



On disks A and B

Ambush at Sorinor is the latest fantasy and strategy game from Mindcraft, distributed through Empire, in the tradition of Siege.

The idea is that there are six warring clans in the land of Sorinor, all fighting desperately for survival. You, as a mercenary, have a choice of four complete scenarios to either battle or think your way through. The name of the game is, as ever, survival and cash ... in that order. Each mission you take on — it could be ambushing a party of travellers or escorting VIPs — has a cash value which you agree beforehand with the person paying you for the job. You can alter the balance between payment and danger in the missions.

How to play

You must install the game from *both* disks with the 5.25" disks. Log on to the directory in which you installed the game. Then type

Ambush [Enter]

How to quit

There is an exit game icon on the menu bar. See the Readme file for a full explanation.

Hardware required

Ambush needs a minimum of a 12MHz 286-based PC with 256-colour VGA graphics, a hard disk, 640K of memory and a Microsoft-compatible mouse.

Controls

The game is controlled by the mouse.

Instructions

Since Ambush is quite a complicated and sophisticated game with a changeable icon menu system and a lot of rules, it would be next to impossible to explain the entire sytem in the space we have here. Because of this, Empire has provided a tutorial ReadMe file

with the demo that will explain everything you need to know about the aim, strategies and, most importantly, how to play the game.

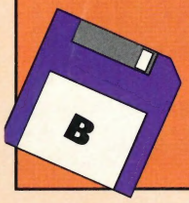
Simply log on to the directory in which you have installed Ambush, and type:

Type ReadMe|more [Enter]

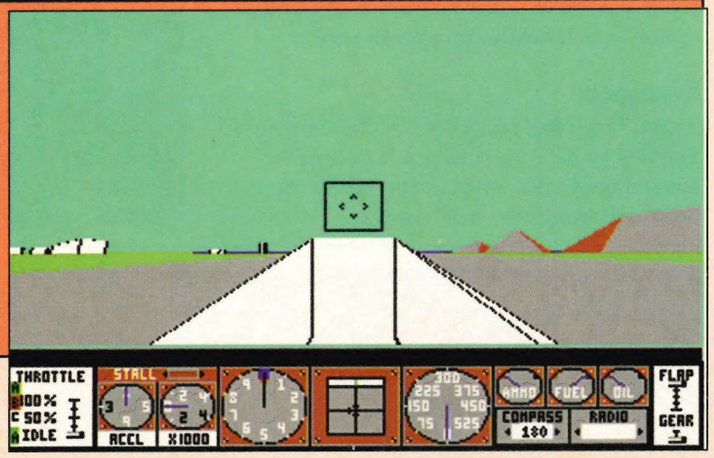
This will allow you to view the contents of the tutorial a screen at a time. You will be prompted for the next page, simply press any key when you are ready to read on. Alternatively you can open the file in a word processor, and you may also find it handy to print out the contents of the file as well. Sorinor is a tough world to survive in so a bit of preparation is definitely a good idea.

Air Warrior

3.5" disks only



On 3.5" disk B



Those of you who saw our issue last month will have noticed the review of Air Warrior, the multi-user fly-and-fight sim from the people at On-Line.

This month's cover disk offers a cut-down version of the game that you can play on your own or over the phone line (via modem) with other users. The demo features a Spitfire, but there are many more planes in the full game or available for download from the bulletin board service, CIX. Obviously this is not the SVGA version but it happily supports CGA/EGA and VGA modes, so nobody should have any problems, and it will give you a fair idea of what flying in Air Warrior is all about.

The aim of the game is simply to get up into the sky to practise your shooting, strafing and any other aerial manoeuvres of a military nature you can think of.

Hardware required

Air Warrior requires at least a 286-based PC, a hard disk, CGA, EGA or VGA graphics, 640K of memory and either a mouse or a joystick to play.

How to start

Air Warrior doesn't run with the Dos expanded memory manager Emm386 installed, so before you start it is essential to REM the relevant line in your Config.sys file.

When your machine has rebooted without the Emm386 driver, log on to the directory in which you have installed Air Warrior, and type

Airwar [Enter]

A picture of a plane will then appear. To access the menu you need to press the F1 key. Scroll through the menu options using the left and right cursor keys. All that remains now is to choose the video resolution that matches your machine's configuration from the Resolution menu, and the Spitfire option from the Transport menu. Then it's up, up and away into the wild blue yonder.

How to quit

From the menu screen, access the Control menu and choose the quit option. If you are in the game and you wish to quit, simply point the plane's nose at the ground and dive headlong towards it. You will then be returned to the menu screen.

Control

Unfortunately, like Ambush at Sorinor, the instructions for Air Warrior are quite lengthy, but a comprehensive Readme file is included with the program. This text file will tell you all you need to know about how to take off and fly your plane as well as reams of information to help you get started if you do have a modem and fancy playing the game with other computer users.

To access this file, log onto the directory where you have installed Air Warrior and either type

Type ReadMe |more [Enter]

Alternatively, you can view the file in a word processor.

Planes cost money!

If you decide to give the multi-player flying a go, there are a couple of important things to bear in mind. First and foremost, *you need a modem*; no modem, no opposition!

When you first connect to the On-Line service which hosts all the multi-player flying, you will be asked to register and *subscribe* to the service. This is not expensive and there are various types of subscription available, but its worth remembering.

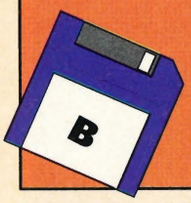
And finally, you have to pay your *phone bill!* There's no way to get round this one, so please remember that time spent flying is time spent running up the phone bill.

Installing your cover disk: details on page 11

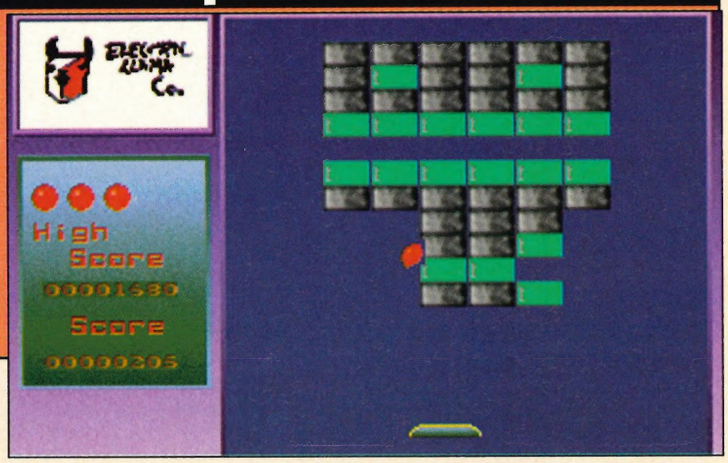
COVER DISKS

Turbo Speed Ball

3.5" disks only



On disk B



Turbo Speed Ball is a simple but addictive shareware game that takes its cue from the old Breakout tradition.

The idea of the game, for those of you not familiar with Breakout, is to direct a bouncing ball against a screen filled with a pattern of brightly coloured bricks. When the ball strikes a brick, the brick disappears and the ball bounces off in a different direction.

The aim of the game is to get rid of all the bricks in this way to progress to the next level. As you progress, the game gets faster and faster and consequently the ball gets progressively harder to block and control.

Turbo Speed Ball is simple, easy and a lot of fun to play. There are different styles of block, some of which will speed the ball up, give extra balls or award bonus points, or an extra level. The speed of the ball can be set in the option screen before you play the game.

Controls

Turbo Speed Ball really couldn't be simpler to play. Move the mouse from left to right to control the paddle, and use the left mouse button to launch the ball into play.

Hardware required

The game needs a mouse and at least a 16MHz 286 PC. A 386 PC is preferable.

How to start

Log on to the directory in which you have installed the game and type

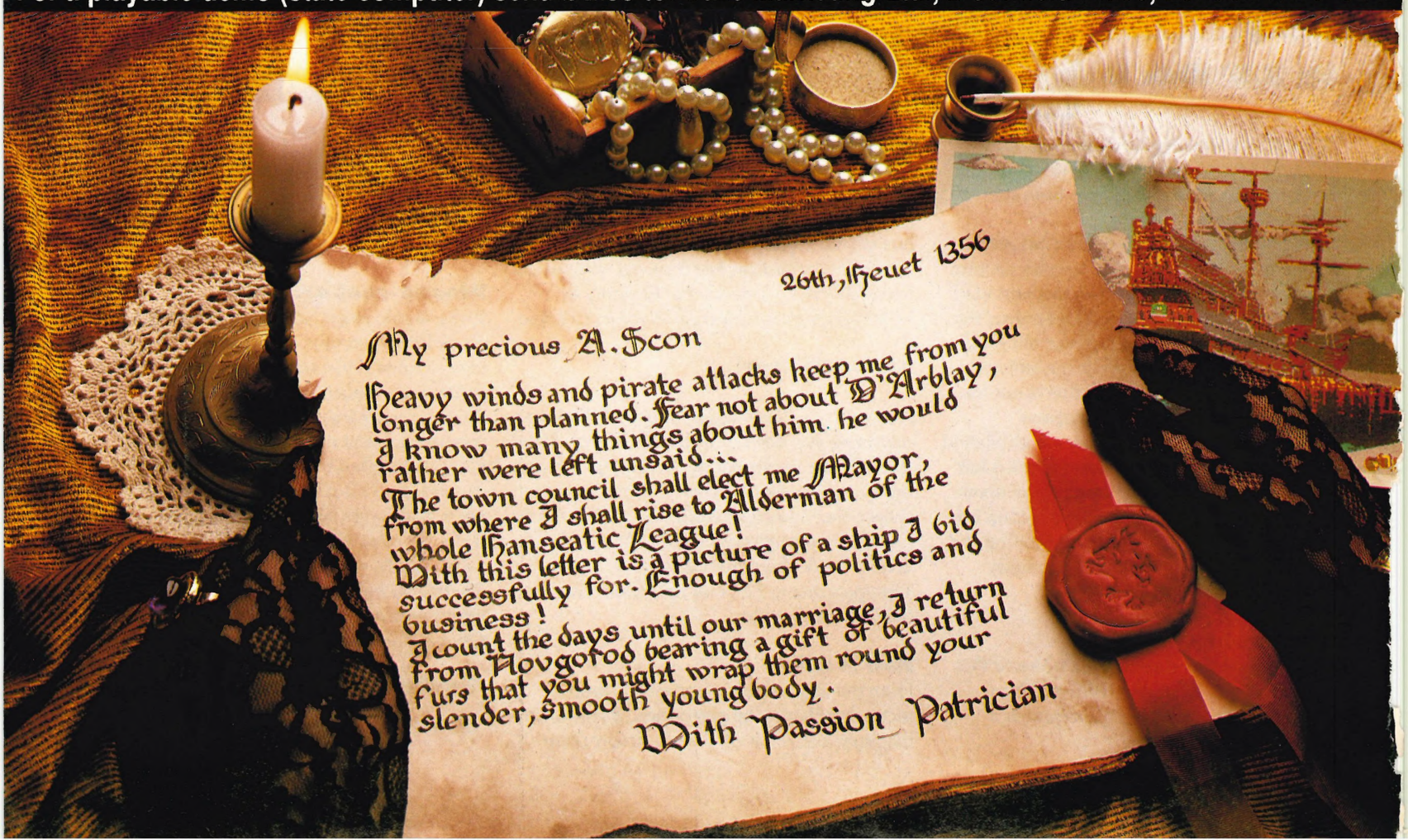
TSB [Enter]

How to quit the game

After you lose all your existing lives, the menu screen gives you the option to have another go by pressing any key, or simply hit Q to quit.

Full registration details and information on other Electric Llama games are available on the final game screen.

For a playable demo (state computer) send £ 2.99 to: Daze Marketing Ltd., 2 Canfield Place, London NW6 3BT.



How to use the cover disks

1. Put the cover disk in any disk drive and log on to that drive. For instance, if you have put it into drive A: type:

A: [Enter]

2. Now type

PCR [Enter]

to load the installation program.

3. There may be a menu asking you to select which language you wish to have the installation messages displayed in. To make your selection use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then click the left mouse button or press the Enter key.

4. A list of programs on the disk will now be displayed. To select the program you wish to install or run, use the mouse or cursor keys to move the highlight bar and then press and release the left mouse button or the Enter key.

5. If the program is of a type that runs directly it will do so now before returning you to the menu and step 4.

6. If the program has to be installed to another disk you will now have to tell the program where you want it to be installed.

7. The program will suggest a drive and directory to install the program to. If you are happy with the suggested location, press the enter key and installation will begin.

8. If you would like the program to be installed to a different drive and/or directory, backspace over the suggested pathname and enter another one. You cannot install the program on the cover disk itself.

9. If there is insufficient space on the disk you have specified, or if the directory you have specified cannot be created, the program will inform you of this and give you the opportunity to enter an alternative location.

10. All being well, the program will now be decompressed and installed at the specified location. You will see a series of messages on the screen as this happens.

11. Once the program has been successfully installed you will see a message reminding you of where it was installed to and telling you which command starts the program. Press a key to return to step 4.

12. When you have installed or played all the programs that you wish to, press Esc to exit to DOS.

Important note for users without a hard disk.

1. Providing that the programs will fit, you can install them on to another floppy disk.

2. If you have a twin drive system you should leave the cover disk in one drive and install each program to a blank formatted disk in the second drive.

3. If you only have a single disk drive, you can install the programs to a blank, formatted disk using the same drive. You should specify drive B: when asked for an install path. DOS will now prompt you when you need to swap the disks. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive B: you should insert the blank disk. When it asks you to insert the disk for drive A: you should put the cover disk back in. You will have to swap disks several times during the installation process.

4. On some occasions you may be asked to insert a system disk. In this case you should insert a system disk instead of the cover disk, and then swap them again when prompted to do so.

Important note for users with mono, LCD or plasma displays

1. The installation program should automatically detect whether you have a mono or colour display and run in the appropriate mode.

2. If you have a grey scale LCD or plasma display you may prefer to run the program in mono rather than colour. You can do this by starting the program with the command:

PCR M [Enter]

3. If you have a non-standard colour display which the program fails to detect you can force it to run in colour mode by starting it with the command:

PCR C [Enter]

Helpline

If you have difficulty in getting your disk to operate, please telephone our helpline number below before returning the disk.

Disk Helpline: (0685) 350505

The helpline operates between 10.30 am and 12.30 pm weekdays.

Please note

PC Review's cover disks are rigorously checked at each stage of production for all known viruses and duplicated under strict quality control.

However, cover disks are used at the reader's own risk. PC Review can accept no responsibility for damage to either data or hardware caused by use of our cover disks.

We also make every effort to ensure that the contents of our cover disks are exactly as advertised. If, however, circumstances should dictate that we are unable to supply the stated programs we will endeavour to provide alternative software.

PC Review, its distributors and retailers will not be held responsible for any unnotified change to the contents of the disks

Faulty disk?

PC Review's cover disks are checked and validated, but if you have reason to believe yours is faulty, pop the disk(s) in a jiffy bag with a self-addressed envelope and postage to the value of 28p (55p from overseas) for return of the new disk and the form below (filled in), and send the package to the following address:

PC Wise
Dowlais Top Business Park, Dowlais
Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glamorgan
Cymru, CF48 2YY

Please DO NOT send the disk back to PC Review — we don't hold stocks of spare disks.

Name:.....

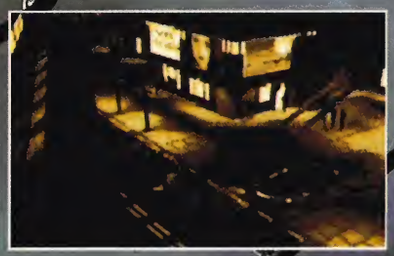
Address:.....

.....

.....

.....

The disk on my copy of PC Review was damaged. Please send me a replacement — I enclose return postage to the value of 28p (55p if overseas) and the original disk



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They are the servants of Syndicates – crime organisations which dominate through corruption and violence.

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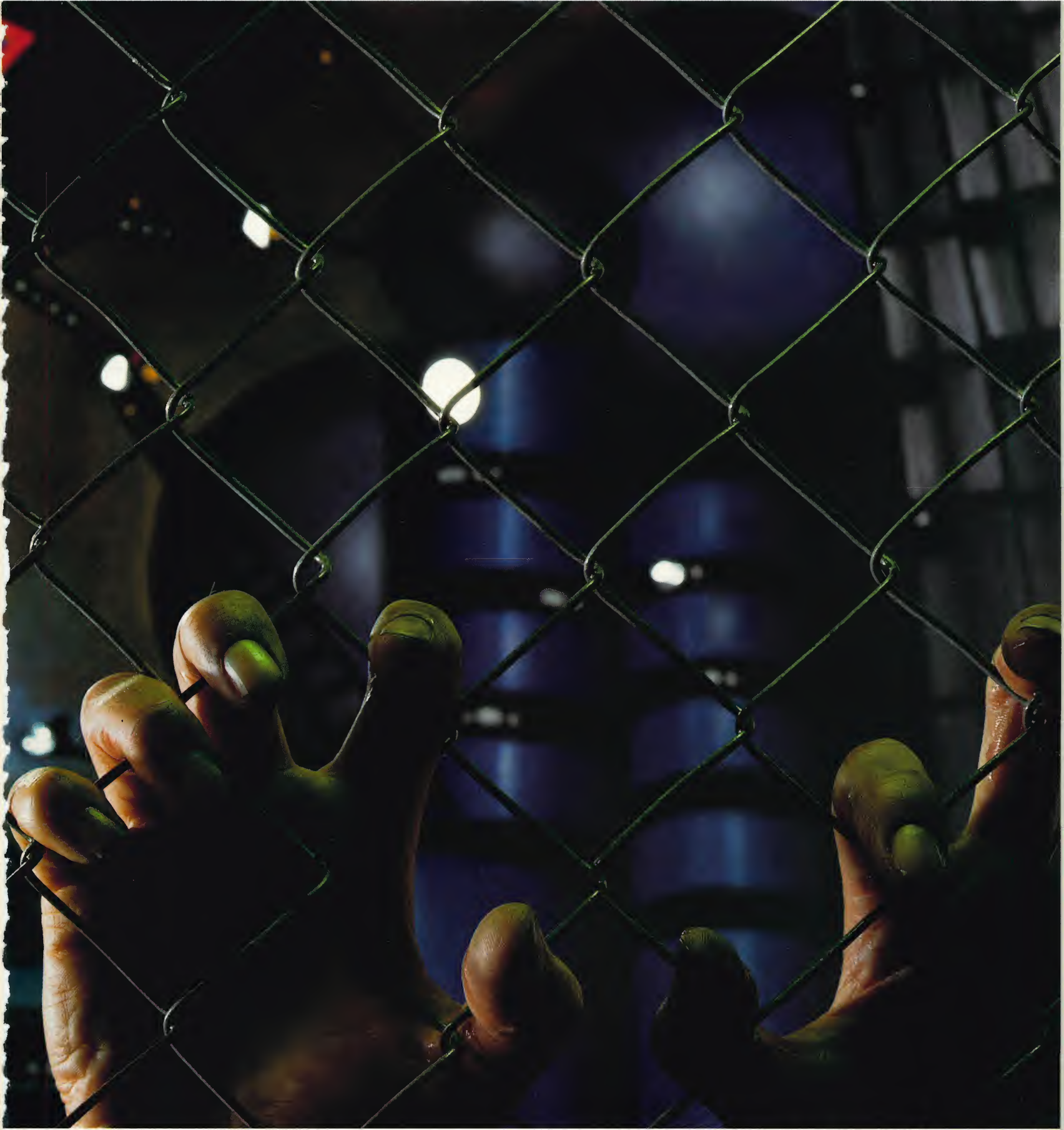

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PRODUCTIONS LTD

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NEWS

IN BRIEF...

● LucasArts is giving Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis is the 'talkie' treatment for the CD-ROM version, with 40 characters speaking 8,000 lines of dialogue.

● Sierra's Roberta Williams is working on Phantasmagoria, an CD-ROM horror game, in which a husband and wife buy a haunted house, only to find that it wreaks havoc in their lives.

● Elonex has cut its prices again: its PC-425XM (with 8Mb RAM and a 400Mb drive) is down £105 to £1,755, and the PC433M is £1,155, down £45. Call Elonex on (081) 452 4444 for details.

● Oops: the gremlins struck at Prehistorik 2 last month. On page 62 it was rated 5; on page 91, it was listed as scoring 2. The correct mark was, of course, 5.

Packard Bell's CD PCs

Packard Bell has a new range of multimedia machines, which will be promoted in Dixons, Curry's superstores and PC World in a campaign to raise awareness (and sales, of course) of the potential of multimedia PCs.

The two Multimedia by Packard Bell PCs are both 25MHz 486SX-based models, with 4Mb RAM, stereo sound card and speakers and a colour Super VGA (1024 x 768) monitor, plus of course the MPC-compatible CD-ROM drive.

The difference between the two lies in the choice of hard disk capacity: 105Mb or 170Mb. Aside from DOS 6.0, Windows 3.1 and Microsoft Works for Multimedia, six CD-ROM programs are also bundled with the PC: Microsoft Multimedia Pack for Windows, World Atlas, The Animals, an Encyclopaedia, Chessmaster 3000 and good old Mavis Beacon teaching typing. Prices start at £1,586.25, inclusive of Vat.

The campaign, with demonstrations running on the Packard Bell PCs should be up and running now.

● Away from the multimedia emphasis, Packard Bell is also supplying PC World with a range of exclusively-configured 486-based PCs, which come complete with Navigator, a simplified front end for Windows with on-screen tutorials and Power Pack, a set of hardware enhancements. The idea is to make the machines as easy to set up and use straightaway as possible, without any time-consuming formatting and configuring.

Domark hits F1

Games publisher Domark has secured the rights to produce a series of official Formula One games for the 1993 and 1994 F1 seasons. The deal, with Fuji Television Network, follows close on the heels of Sega's successful sponsorship of the Williams Formula One racing team and the European Grand Prix.

The first game to be produced under the licence will be called, simply enough, F1. It has been in development for almost two years, and Domark has used professional racing drivers during testing. The PC version of F1 will be available in September 1993, and will feature a split-screen two player mode, individual car set-ups and all the major world championship circuits, drivers and teams. According to Domark's managing director Mark Strachan, "This is the most important title Domark has ever published, and the most impressive sporting licence in video game history." Hopefully the game will prove to be more successful than Domark's last sporting venture, International Rugby Challenge.

Easy add-ons for your PC

Microsoft and Compaq are currently involved in a joint development of a standard called 'plug and play'. The aim of the system is to make it easier for users to add peripherals, such as CD-ROM drives and SCSI cards, to their PCs. The software will automatically configure itself to make the new add-ins work, without all the aggravation of messing around with jumpers and DIP switch settings that we're used to.

The initiative is aimed towards capturing the potentially lucrative home user and small business market, where customers are often reluctant to move into, or change existing computer systems because of the troublesome nature of dealing with new and unfriendly machine configurations.

The first products to use the plug and play standard should appear before the end of the year, and Microsoft claims they will be very aggressively priced.

Face to face on the telephone

British Telecom and IBM UK have collaborated to produce the PC Videophone, a combination of telephone and computer which enables the user to make face-to-face phone calls on screen.

The technology is based on a PC videocard developed by BT and software developed by IBM. The software is easy to install and use, featuring a window-based graphical interface. Users can bring up a video picture in one window whilst working in others, thus enabling them to share the data they wish to discuss.

Nick Temple, chief executive of IBM UK, has high hopes for the product, saying, "It's the most exciting development in this area of communications for some time and there is massive potential for it to become and office standard."

The PC Videophone conforms to the CCITT international standard H320 which makes it ideal for video-conferencing. This standard also protects business investment when purchasing the PC Videophone.

The voice, video and data operates using BT's ISDN service so the user will be able to take advantage of the economical ISDN call charge in both the UK and abroad.

PCs containing the videocard, software, handset and solid state television camera should be available by the end of the year, priced around £3,000-£3,500. Those who already own a PC have also been catered for and will be able to purchase a videocard to slot into their machine.

For further information, contact Kevin Morgan at BT on (071) 728 3843.

Sign of the Times

One year ago ...

Once clear indicator of any computer's mass appeal is its availability in your local high street, and IBM, evidently deciding that if you can't beat 'em, join 'em, launched its own 'clone' range, the Ambra PCs, through a subsidiary company, and backed by a heavy TV advertising campaign.

Two years ago ...

August 1991 heralded the first sighting of Strike Commander, as Origin talked to PC Leisure magazine about the progress so far. "You will be thrust into an alternate reality of fractal terrain and atmospheric hazing, 3D realtime bitmapped images, texture-mapped and Gourad-shaded polygonal objects ..." Sounds promising, eh? Less good news was Chris Roberts' admission that Strike would take up about "eight to 15 megabytes when loaded and uncompacted on a hard drive". If only ...

Print Shop Deluxe Offer

As a result of the overwhelming success of our extra fonts offer for the Print Shop Deluxe cover disk and the number of inquiries we received about the full program, PC Review and Electronic Arts have teamed up to offer you an exclusive discount on Print Shop Deluxe.

Electronic Arts is releasing Broderbund's Print Shop Deluxe on September 3, at £54.99. However, using the form below, PC Review readers can purchase Print Shop Deluxe for £49.99 — a saving of £5.

How to order

Please fill in the form, right, and send it to PC Review (not Electronic Arts) — and if you're paying by cheque, you should enclose the cheque with the form. You can pay by cheque, or any of the credit cards listed, but please don't send cash through the post. If you do pay by cheque, make the cheque payable to Electronic Arts Limited (not PC Review). The product will be despatched to you by Electronic Arts within 28 days.

The closing date for this offer is September 30, 1993, so you should ensure your order arrives at PC Review by that date.

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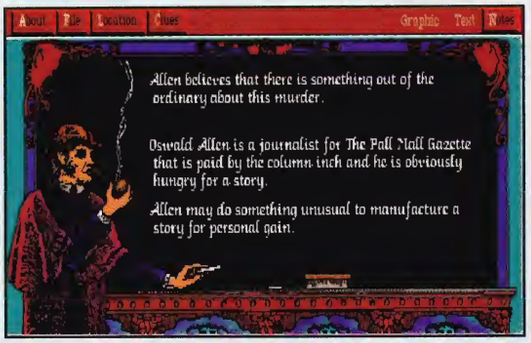
Offer closes September 30, 1993

COMING SOON

Sierra's latest series character is Gabriel Knight (the hunk, top left). His first outing sees him as an amateur sleuth in a psychological suspense adventure.



Although it's a murder mystery game, Mirage's Jack the Ripper uses reports and data from the actual investigation in 1888 for historical consistency.

Railroad Tycoon Deluxe is a graphically enhanced version of the ever-popular original, with 11 new trains, and new areas in which to build your empire.

Slater and Charlie is Sierra's latest game for young children, telling the story of these two lovable beasties, with lots of animation and in-game tunes.

Whatever happened to ...?

● So what happened to Sensible Soccer? We've been promising it for ages and it's been about as prompt as a BR train on a Monday morning. But, now you need wait no longer as John Bennett ends an oh-so-arduous four month testing of the game to bring you the definitive review on page 58.

But why so late? Apparently the cause of the delay all boils down to a case of bad language. It appears that the development of Sensi has literally been a "game of two halves". In the first half, you spend months programming the thing and putting the conversion together, and in the second half you spend even more months taking out lots of naughty words that some malicious individual decided to slip quietly into the team data.

The guys from Renegade were unavailable for comment, presumably having nipped out to look up some of the more interesting words.

● Last month you may have been intrigued by DID's two forthcoming PC releases in the Coming Soon section. Odyssey (which is sort of the sequel to Epic but intended to be considerably better) was the fast and furious space combat game and Inferno was the nifty looking flight sim. But since then it's been all change in the Ocean labeling department. Apparently the name Odyssey had already been registered, and so had to be dropped, leaving Ocean with Inferno, and a now untitled space-combat-game-that's-not-like-Epic-at-all. Ocean then decided that Inferno was such a cool title it would match the untitled space-combat-game-that's-not-like-Epic-at-all much better, which left the flight sim nameless. And now Ocean has renamed the flight sim completely, to the snappy Tactical Fighter Experimental (TFX). The full title of the ex-Odyssey, by the way, is now Inferno: The Odyssey Continues.

● Next up is that lovely piece of fiction that we here at PC Review call the Next Month page. It boldly promised a playable demo of Lost Vikings this issue but as you'll have doubtless noticed it hasn't materialised. Unfortunately, Lost Vikings slipped through the door just too late for inclusion this month, but you will get to play the disk next month. Apologies to all.

● Finally, look out! Wacky Funsters 2 (or Too) is on its way. Fancy a game of Phlegmmings anyone?

● Dean Evans

Virgin makes own brand PC

Virgin plans to build and distribute its own brand of PCs for the leisure computing market through wholly-owned subsidiary Virgin Euromagnetics. The machine will be launched at this September's Business Computing Show at Earls Court, and sold in Virgin Computer Games Centres in the UK.

At present, the company is being cagey about exact technical and pricing details of the PCs prior to the launch, but expects to produce a range of 486 PCs with prices starting from around £1,100. This would put them in a mid-range, rather than cheap clone price, bracket.

Virgin Euromagnetics, which distributes floppy disk and data cartridges to Virgin stores, came up with the idea, and provides the technical expertise to enable the machine to be built in the UK.

On-Line releases multi-player Cyberworlds

On-Line is expanding its multi-player games operation by releasing Cyberworlds for the PC this month. Priced at £99.99 with a basic specification modem, or £49.99 without, Cyberworlds is a collection of three games that allow you to link computers and play games against real people.

The collection kicks off with strategy and exploration in Global Conquest, and also includes CyberChess, as well as flight and combat simulation against up to 40 live opponents in SVGA Air Warrior (see review in Issue 21).

Electronic Arts' profits increase

The world's biggest software publisher, Electronic Arts, has announced an profit increase of 65% in the fiscal year 1993 compared to 1992. The company made a profit of $30.8 million (£19.25m) on a turnover of $298 million (£186.25m) compared to income of $18.6 million (£11.6m) from $175 million (£109m) in 1992.

BATTLE ISLE '93

The Moon of Chromos

The unimaginable has happened: despite his enormous material losses, Skynet Titan has managed to recover and is preparing for a new, final attack.
The Drulls and Skynet Titan have both been searching for the vital energy crystals which have become rare on Chromos, and have managed to find some on a moon. But wherever the Drulls try to gain a foothold, they find the enemy has got there before them. Skynet Titan is mobilising his still enormous forces once more. Fighting has already broken out. Can the Drulls emerge victorious from this last battle?

With its new maps, new music and newly created units, this game represents a milestone in strategic simulations. Even the most experienced BATTLE ISLE General will be forced to rethink his strategy in this continuation of the BATTLE ISLE saga, which also includes animated sequences.
Like all parts of BATTLE ISLE, this next step into the universe of BATTLE ISLE is designed for 1 or 2 players and can be installed on your hard disk.

Available for Commodore AMIGA & MS-DOS (VGA)
Kompart UK Ltd. • 20 Guildford Road • AL1 5JY • St. Albans, Herts. • 0727 868005

Blue Byte

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Pilot's cockpit

Stunning detail

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Sophisticated mission planning

Awesome missions

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PC Screen Shots

Digital Integration

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VISA Access

Bilbo's curse

If you go back to the roots of interactive entertainment, you discover some harsh truths; truths that everybody involved in games development today should take note of.

The machines of yesteryear had no graphics, no sound, and a hulking great teletype to print out the company accounts. These clunky machines naturally meant clunky games. Hunt the Wampus asked for single letter commands as you move around a conceptual grid, seeking or fleeing from the dreaded Wampus. Terse text reports on the teletype revealed your progress. But we tend to forget two very important points about these pioneering games. The first is the identity of the players; the second is the nature of the actual code.

Computing then was a highly specialised discipline. Programmers wore, metaphorically if not literally, white coats. Their working environments were dominated by the machines they used.

These people created games in their own image, and in the image of their art.

If we'd spent more time in the last ten years developing games like this (it's Ant Attack), we might now know what to do with CD-ROM.

The Hobbit running on the Spectrum. Most games development is still stuck in this 'comfortable tunnel like hall'.

And their art was computing. It was not movies, or books, or any other form of storytelling. These people lived and breathed programming.

So Hunt the Wampus was a simple application of a programming construct called the 'array' (experienced programmers please nod sagely and move on here). An array operates like a matrix. It enables you to set up a range of values in the computer's memory and then perform operations on it. Wampus is a straightforward two-dimensional array holding numeric values to indicate the presence, or absence, of the dreaded beast. The game idea (not just its implementation) bears a very direct relationship to the actual code that makes up the program.

Vorsprung durch Technik

Let's now leap forward to the early 80s. Who was writing games then? Chris Crawford is a typical example: in 1981 he was working with Alan Kay (the godfather of modern portable computing and graphics interfaces) at Atari. Japanese and American programmers were coming up with new concepts for arcade machines, a market transformed by the introduction of Nolan Bushnell's Pong.

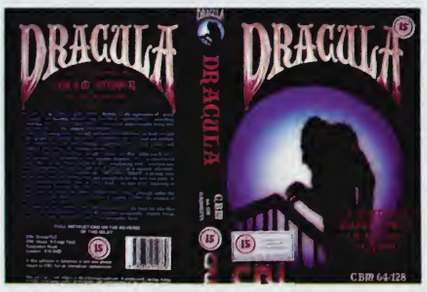
But ask yourself the same questions as we did before. Who were these people? What were they doing? And why? The answer is simple: they were programmers. Their language was the language of the processor. Sure, they watched movies; they read books; they went to the theatre. But when they entered the laboratory, they cast aside such mundane concerns and put on their white coats. Their's, Igor, was a higher and more noble destiny ...

And then along came The Hobbit. This 1983 chartbuster was a very different beast. It was based on a book. Its roots were not in interactive technology, but in the printed page. Since then, we've had games based on books, based on movies (Ghostbusters cast that particularly hideous incantation), based even on plays (who remembers Macbeth?). All of them trying to tell stories, all of them taking us away from the technology of interaction.

Oops, not quite all. There were (and still are) all those coin-op games to copy. But how many true innovations can you spot in the coin-op market since 1983? Hmmm ...

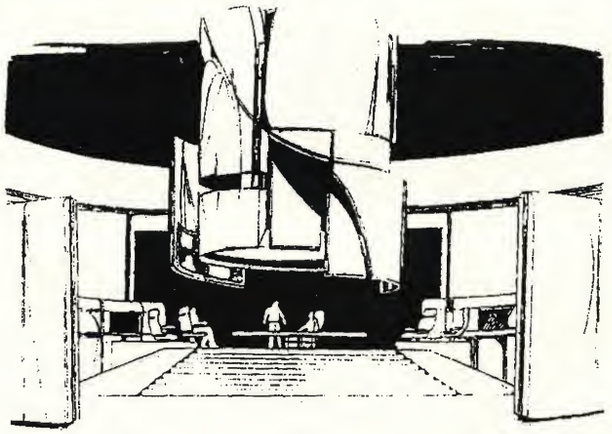
Despite a few shining examples (Boulderdash and Tetris, to name a couple), the language of interactivity has lain almost entirely dormant over the last ten years and the language of the printed word and the silver screen has taken its place. As a result of this neglect, we have technology (CD-ROM, 3DO, etc) that can now shout 'Interact' in full multi-coloured stereo ... but we have nothing new to say.

Steve Cooke is a veteran games-player, game designer, scriptwriter, and magazine editor (PC Leisure is included among his credits). This is the first article in a series of columns in which Steve will be highlighting issues in computer entertainment.



Bilbo's Curse begat games like this. The author said on the back of the inlay that he'd done his absolute best to create the feeling of a book.

Title	**Cyberace**
Developer	**Cyberdreams**
Publisher	**Cyberdreams**
Contact	**(071) 328 3267**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Arcade**
Price	**£TBA**



Cyberdreams gets together with designer Syd Mead to produce this futuristic racing simulation

CyberRace

Right: Syd Mead's artwork formed the basis for the game's graphics.
Below: an in-game shot shows the interior of the vehicle and the terrain to good effect.

Cyberdreams is dedicated to creating games which draw their inspiration from what is known as serious science fiction. Following on from its collaboration with fantasy artist H R Giger, best known for his work on Alien, to produce the award winning Darkseed, it has now teamed up with Syd Mead of Bladerunner fame.

The resulting game is a significantly different product from Darkseed. Set in the distant future, CyberRace is a 3D combat and racing simulation which makes use of the latest graphic technology. Landscapes are rendered using Voxel spacing, a technique recently featured in Novalogic's Comanche: Maximum Overkill and Xenobots. This gives a more realistic look to the game than the traditional polygon-based landscapes often seen in flight sims and driving games such as MicroProse's Formula 1 Grand Prix, and provides a greater sense of depth and space than could be achieved by bitmapping alone. The vehicles are all ray-traced and can be customised by the player himself, whilst the 256-colour between-race sequences include digitised footage of professional actors.

CyberRace takes place in a galaxy which has been largely devastated by the war between the Terrans and their arch enemies, the Kalidasians. As hostilities escalate, it looks increasingly likely that, not only will the two empires annihilate each other, but they will lay waste to the entire universe as well. To put a stop to the carnage, the ruling council has decreed that the two enemies should cease fighting and settle their differences on the cybertrack, a futuristic racing circuit.

You play the part of Clay Shaw, a man forced to represent the Terran Empire on the cybertrack. Although he has moral reservations, Clay has much to lose should he fail to comply, since the Terrans have kidnapped his girlfriend in order to gain a hold over him.

Industrial designer and futurist Syd Mead has provided concept design for no less than seven major films, notably Star Trek: The Motion Picture, Bladerunner, Tron, 2010, Aliens and Short Circuit. Aside from receiving international acclaim for his work, perhaps his single most remarkable achievement is that

every one of the six films mentioned above has been nominated for an Academy Award for special effects.

Syd Mead began his career as a designer for the Ford Motor Company's Advanced Styling Studio after graduating from the Art Center School in Los Angeles back in 1959. Since than he has gone on to design the interiors of several private aircraft and a number of boats and yachts. He also provided the concept and artwork for a ride at a Japanese theme park, 2056, and has since turned his considerable talents to designing nightclubs and exhibiting his work at several different shows around the world.

More recently, his work has found its way into computer games, not only in CyberRace but also in Empire's Maelstrom, fully reviewed in Issue 21. Referring to his work with Cyberdreams, Mead said, "Designing CyberRace is another expression of my desire to participate in the future. Raw speed is a thrilling concept. Combine that with combat and a futuristic scenario, and you have the makings of quite an experience. CyberRace is a real achievement."

Not content to confine his involvement to the game itself, Syd Mead has also had a hand in the design of CyberRace's unique packaging. Cyberdreams was pleased with the reception given to Dark Seed's multi-dimensional packaging, and aim to take this marketing strategy a stage further with CyberRace. The distinctively shaped and colourful box looks certain to grab plenty of attention when it appears on the shelves later this year.

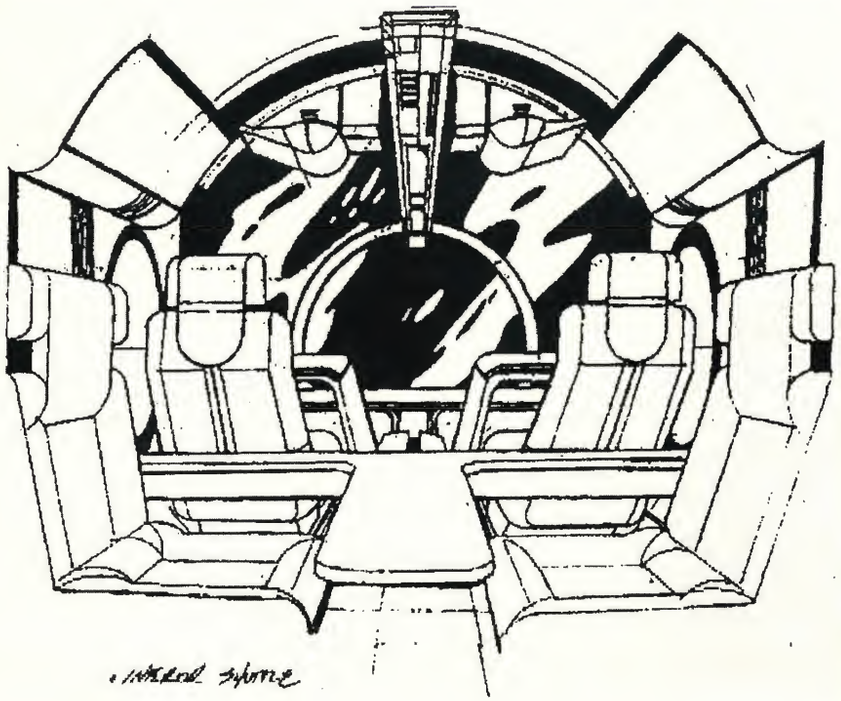
Whilst CyberRace is sure to have plenty going for it in the visual department, Cyberdreams has made sure that the sound will be every bit as impressive. The musical soundtrack features a version of David Bowie's Space Oddity, which has been licensed for use in the game. In addition to this, there are plenty of atmospheric sound effects and the CD-ROM version also features fully digitised speech thoughout the game.

Both disk-based and CD-ROM versions of CyberRace look set to appear on the PC in September of this year. At this stage of development, CyberRace is already starting to look extremely impressive. The combination of advanced graphic techniques, a stunning soundtrack and Syd Mead's expansive imagination looks set to be a winner.

Cyberdreams also has a number of other projects under development, with plans to release the games towards the end of 1994. Dark Seed II continues the story of Mike Dawson, hero of Dark Seed, and picks up where the original game left off. It will contain more animations and digitised sound and once again features H R Giger's distinctive artwork.

In keeping with the company's policy of developing software with a science-fiction slant, I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream is an adventure based upon fantasy writer Harlan Ellison's story of the same name. Ellison has picked up numerous awards during his long career, including the Nebula Award three times and the Hugo Award nine times.

Finally, Hunters of Ralk is the first adventure in a new role-playing series designed by Dungeons and Dragons supremo Gary Gygax. The game engine has been designed with computer users in mind, and aims to exploit all the latest advances in gaming technology.



Top: this excerpt from the game's introduction shows the effects of war between the rival empires.
Left: an early sketch by Syd Mead showing the interior of your cockpit.
Below: in the pits before the big race.

Title	**Simon the Sorcerer**
Developer	**Adventure Soft**
Publisher	**Adventure Soft**
Contact	**(021) 625 3377**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Graphic adventure**
Price	**£39.99**

Simon the Sorcerer

Like the torture chamber above, all the backgrounds were first drawn on to paper then scanned into the computer, where the artists set to work on them. Working this way allows better, more high resolution backgrounds to be created.

Described rather hastily in Issue 20 as "cute, cute, and truly unbelievably cute", Simon the Sorcerer from Adventure Soft is poised to deliver much more than a cute fantasy-style puzzler with fancy graphics.

Simon the Sorcerer is a cartoon-style comedy fantasy, programmed and designed by Alan Bridgman and Michael Woodroffe and written by Mike's son Simon. With influences ranging from Terry Pratchett to Tolkien, at first glance Simon seems to owe more than a passing nod of recognition to Monkey Island. Adventure Soft is emulating the successful LucasArts formula because Mike believes that Monkey Island developed a market which no one is currently satisfying. In fact, apart from Sierra, nobody is really putting much humour into games and so in September Adventure Soft is making a dawn raid on the market.

It's all very simple. Simon really isn't a magician at all, but a young boy, transported into a fantasy land of wizards and monsters, charged with the seemingly huge task of single-handedly stopping the spread of evil coming from the tower of Sordid the Sorceror.

Simon has a simple but intelligent point and click interface, (very similar in look and feel to Monkey Island) but uses 12 basic verbs to cover everything the player could want to do, with a multitude of witty responses to people who want to try to stuff melons up pigs' bums and so on. Apart from the visual and textual humour in the game, including a troll on strike and a dragon with a cold, the game's obvious selling point is going to be the distinctive style of the graphics.

These, it must be said, look stunning, putting the current batch of adventures not just in the shade but in total darkness. Simon contains over 100 locations including a tavern, a troll bridge, a dwarven mine and a torture chamber, graphics that will have taken 45 man months by the eventual release date, with six months of game coding and two months of scriptwriting to boot.

One of the chief aims was to get the graphics to look as good as possible, and this was achieved without using the traditional methods of graphic drawing. All backdrops in the game were first hand drawn on to paper and then scanned into the computer with an ordinary hand scanner. Five artists then worked on these original drawings, touching them up and colouring them in, creating the final digital images in Autodesk Animator Pro.

In Simon, the gameworld is designed around a forest with all the main locations scattered around it. As a result, there's no one correct path to follow (avoiding the linear A to B to C pitfall), but, needless to say, you'll still need to visit them all during the game.

Point-and-click adventures have often been criticised for being too easy, just a question of using A with B to get C. Here, however, the puzzles are slightly more lengthy and it's more a case of using A with B to get C which then gets used with D but only if you have Y and Z, as it were. As the process of puzzle solving is linear you can't change much, but you can make them more complicated.

There is a strong determination on the part of Adventure Soft to make Simon the next Monkey Island and to cause as big a stir and create as much of a following as Monkey Island did. Expectations are high and from what we've seen it certainly looks very impressive.

Will Simon steal the coveted Monkey Island crown? You can decide for yourself when Simon the Sorcerer makes his appearance in September.

The Swampling scene contains over 1000 frames of animation alone, all set against beautifully hand-drawn backgrounds.

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Title	**Lands of Lore: The Throne of Chaos**
Developer	**Westwood Studios**
Publisher	**Virgin**
Contact	**(081) 960 2255**
Release date	**September**
Genre	**Fantasy role-playing**
Price	**£TBA**

Lands of Lore: *The Throne of Chaos*

Virgin gives birth to an all new role-playing extravaganza which aims to take the fantasy game to new heights

Westwood Studios, formerly Westwood Associates, is perhaps best known as the team behind the first two games in the Eye of the Beholder series. Rather than producing Beholder III, released last month for SSI, the US-based company has instead written its own version of the title, following its acquisition by Virgin Games. The result is Lands of Lore, a game Westwood promises retains the best features of Beholder while offering exciting improvements to boot.

The story is based on the character of Scotia, a power-hungry agent of the Dark Army who has designs on conquering the world. Scotia has the ability to disguise her hag-like features by transforming herself into a beautiful young woman, but she can never conceal her dark ambition. Your job is to locate an artefact known as the truth stone and ultimately to help your monarch, the good King Richard of Gladstone, defeat the evil Scotia.

Lands of Lore began development in June 1992, with Phil Gorrow as lead programmer, Bill Crum as designer, Brett Sperry as executive producer and Rick Gush as producer. It uses a new version of the game engine employed in Eye of the Beholder II, with several modifications. The most noteworthy changes include a better monster animation system which allows for much more lifelike movements, and an increased number of interactive cinematic sequences. New money, magic, inventory and combat systems have been implemented, but the most welcome addition could well be the introduction of an automapper.

Work on the game's graphics began last autumn, with as many as 12 artists involved with the project. At its current stage of development, the 3D scrolling looks considerably smoother than in Beholder and other similar products. The character portraits have also been worked on, taking on a beaten-up apearance when wounded and being animated when the characters speak. In addition to the usual music and sound effects, the game also features the now obligatory digitised speech from professional actors.

The story has not undergone many alterations, but is now no longer restricted to a single line. There are many different paths through the game and several different possible conclusions. The outcome reflects the action and choices of the player, which should keep interest high throughout the game.

Character development is also up to the player. There are seven characters to choose from, but unlike other role-playing games, you are not restricted to a single character class. If you put the emphasis on combat, your character will become a fighter, but if you prefer magic, you are more likely to end up playing a magician.

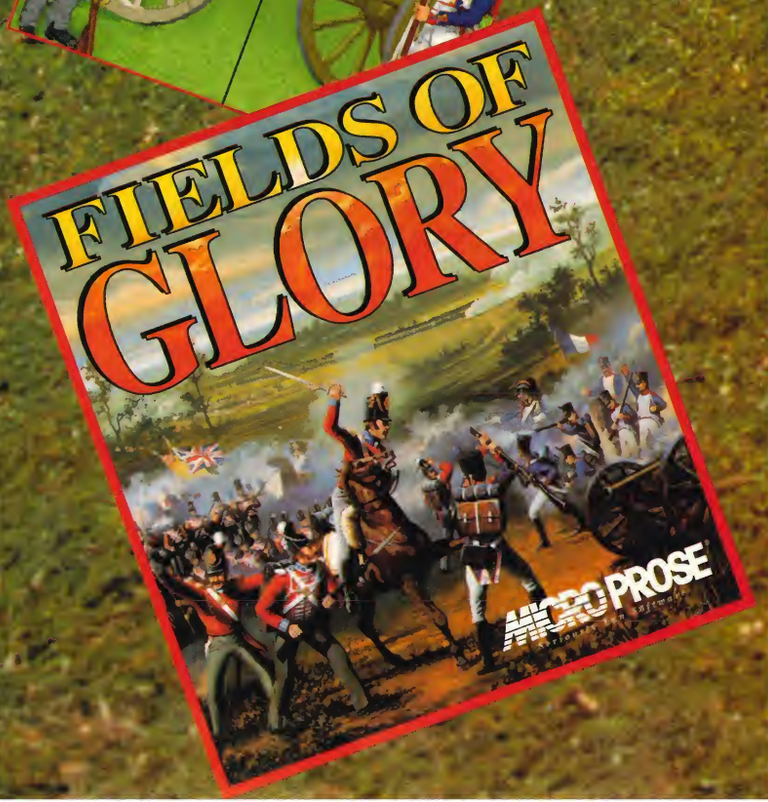
At this stage, Lands of Lore seems to have the makings of very interesting game. It looks to have successfully captured the spirit of the Eye of the Beholder series whilst appearing a lot more polished technically. With stiff opposition from Origin's Ultima Underworld games, Westwood have risen to the challenge by producing a game which looks set to become a classic in its own right.

Battling with this ferocious beastie has resulted in a few cuts and bruises, and the darned thing is still going strong. Time for that 'heal' spell.

FIELDS OF GLORY

TOUGH DECISIONS AS THE BATTLE RAGES

FEATURING CQCS Close-Quarters Combat System



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THE FUTURE STARTS HERE

The Summer Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago is the world's prime showcase for all the PC games which will be released between now and the end of the year. Christina Erskine was there, and brings back this special report on the games to look out for this autumn

Right: McCormick North is the vast hangar where the computer entertainment industry shows off its wares. In fact, it's only one hall out of the four which make up the Consumer Electronics Show.

Twice a year, the US computer games industry (and a goodly proportion of its European counterpart) gathers at the Consumer Electronics Show to showcase and haggle over forthcoming games, hardware and technological innovations. In our report from the winter event from Las Vegas (PC Review Issue 18), we concentrated on the hardware. But if it's June, it must be Chicago, where software publishers make up their Christmas lists and preview the programs coming out later this year.

In recent years, the software side of CES has been dominated by gigantic marquee-like Sega and Nintendo stands. This time, however, the PC more than held its own, with a wealth of new games being shown for the first time, from all the major publishers and a smattering of new ones.

Discernible trends this year included the establishment of CD-ROM as a platform, with just about every major exhibitor showing at least one CD-ROM game, and many of these being original developments rather than conversions. And if last year's big programming thing was Voxelspace, this year it's 3D rendering in 3D Studio and the smooth hi-res graphic effects thus generated. The one game that has all the established publishers following in its wake is, perhaps surprisingly, Wolfenstein. Nearly everyone is producing a first person perspective, fast-moving, fast-scrolling, "inspired by Wolfenstein" game, even if the scenarios and storylines do differ (sometimes only slightly). See the panel onpage 33 for the evidence.

The links with the movie industry are getting closer and closer. LucasArts went public on Steven Spielberg's collaboration on The Dig; Interplay is producing a game entirely with digitised backgrounds and characters, Software Toolworks has taken on the Star Wars characters for its forthcoming rival to Battlechess, and just about any game using speech — as many of them are — now boasts a cast list of professional actors, many of whom seem to have cut their teeth on Twin Peaks and Doogie Howser MD, before reaching the dizzy heights of digitisation. What there wasn't a great deal of was innovations in gameplay. Multimedia, yes, particularly if you broaden the term to include such novelties as Star Trek: 25th Anniversary with speech control via the Sierra Semiconductors' Aria Listener board, so that you can direct the SS Enterprise simply by telling it, for example, "Ahead ... ahead ... fire lasers ..." etc.

In general, however, programmers have barely ventured out from the dungeons, or down from the skies, or back from outer space. The improvements are generally cosmetic: graphics, sound and particularly speech are the areas being worked on for this autumn's big games. That having been said, it's unarguable that there is an astonishing strength in depth in PC entertainment, and the standards of detail and presentation

(and the hardware demands being made on your poor old machine) are rising rapidly. A game which looks mediocrely competent today would probably have been hailed as radically ground-breaking just 18 months ago or so.

What follows on these pages is really only a selection of the wares that were on offer. I've deliberately omitted titles which have no certain route to release in the UK — at least, at the time of writing, or games, which though they will undoubtedly be good, don't appear to offer anything particularly new, or anything in the way of pedigree. Some are also in very early stages of development, so that the early screens shown here may well change between now and release date.

The Dig

LucasArts

Release date TBA

This is it. In what is probably the most interesting collaboration between the movie and interactive game world ever, Steven Spielberg and Brian Moriarty (originally of Infocom, designer of Loom for the PC) have got together to dream up The Dig, a graphic adventure based around an archaeology in space theme.

"It's something I've always wanted to do," Spielberg, an ardent fan of LucasArts' Monkey Island games, is quoted as saying. "It's a story I've had in my head for years, and I thought it would make better game than a film. As a matter of fact, we couldn't afford to make it as a film."

Brian Moriarty, now that he can take his tongue out of his cheek (see PC Review, Games of the 21st Century, Issue 21, for details!), has this to add, "Steven's storytelling instincts set this game apart. His input helped us to integrate the striking visual effects with a compelling plot and characters. It's spectacular, but it's a human spectacle."

As everyone on the planet is aware, Spielberg has been kept pretty busy with Jurassic Park over the last few months and probably hasn't had much time to key in many of the coding routines for The Dig. His input to the game has been the original storyline, character dynamics and puzzle design.

That storyline casts you as Boston Low, leader of a team of space explorers stranded on a hostile planet in the year 1998. You need to control your increasingly mutinous crew as you search through the ruins of the planet's lost civilisation for the key to the technology to get you back to earth, and there will, we are promised, be a few surprises en route. Given the undoubted skills of Spielberg and Moriarty, there's no reason why The Dig shoudn't be huge.

Oddly, LucasArts was quite muted about its latest signing at CES. Indeed, it was Spielberg's other blockbuster, Jurassic Park, which was one of the show's main attractions, with clips from the film showing in the Sega 'mall', and very brief extracts from the 3DO CD game on 3DO's stand.

Stonekeep

Interplay Productions

Due out in October

Definitely wins the best-looking dungeon award. With its headquarters just outside Los Angeles, Interplay thoroughly enjoys pulling in Hollywood talent, dressing them up in costume and digitising them for posterity in its computer games. The big ideas behind Stonekeep have been to make this first person per-

spective game fill the entire screen to increase the 'being there' feeling, and to use digitised graphics for playing characters, monsters and backdrops as far as possible. Game producer Michael Quarles deliberately chose non-computer experienced D&D enthusiasts for the development team in order to fuse programming techniques with the expectations of 'real-life' D&D players. All inventories and scoreboards are accessible as pull-down screen windows — when you find and pick up an object, you can zoom in on it to see, for example, the magic ring being put on your finger. The dungeons — and there are 13 differently styled levels of them — really do look good, especially in animation, while the saga of digitising the skeleton monster will be keeping Interplay going at dinner parties for some time to come — after a number of misfires, they acquired an authentic medical school model, dismantled the bones and then reconstructed them, piece by piece, around the body of the unfortunate actor chosen to play the part of first skeleton.

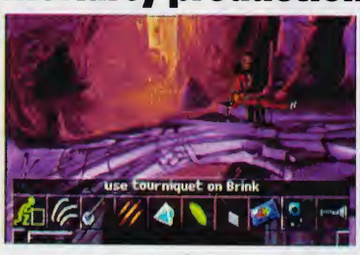
Civil War

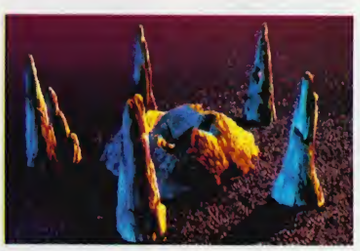
MicroProse

Due out in October

To be fair, there wasn't a great deal of Civil War on show, but then, it is by Sid Meier, and he's never let us down yet. Potentially a more specialist game than either Railroad Tycoon

The Dig: a Spielberg/Moriarty production





Sagas ...

Legend of Kyrandia 2

Virgin Games

Certainly one of 1992's prettiest adventures, Kyrandia returns, although the fate of the land now rests with young mystic Zanthia.

Goblins 3

Coktel Vision

At least they didn't call it Gobliiins. The title is misleading enough, anyway, since there's only one goblin in this third outing.

Police Quest 4

Sierra On-Line

Ominously, boasts ex-LA police chief Daryl Gates as the authort, with digitised backdrops from downtown Los Angeles.

Flight Simulator 5 scenery disks

Mallard

Take to the skies again with a host of exotic locations, such as Paris and Tahiti.

or Civilization, Civil War gives you a choice of three years in the American Civil War to act as a starting point — 1860, 1861, and 1862 — and gives you the choice between fighting for the Confederacy (the South) or the Union (the North).

Megarace

Cryo/Mindscape

Due out in November

Cryo is the French team responsible for Dune and KGB, but in Megarace, which is being developed for CD-ROM, we have potentially something completely different. Again, it's early days yet, but the 3D rendered backdrops look tremendous. And fast. This is a futuristic head-to-head driving game, with lethal race cars and even more deadly weaponry to arm yourself with.

Civil War, above right, is Sid Meier's latest opus. Right: Megarace is a CD-ROM original from French developer Cryo. Top right, this page: Indycar Racing is the follow-up to Indianapolis 500.

Indycar Racing

Papyrus/Virgin

Release date TBA

Papyrus Software wrote the original Indianapolis 500 racing game, which despite being five years old, is still one of the most playable racing games on the market. Indycar Racing aims to improve on it with 33 cars on the track, hills and 3D terrain in the background, and texture-mapped, rather than plain polygonal graphics, faster animation, and a choice of camera viewing angles. It will also have sampled sound, "much better crashes", and a head-to-head modem play facility. All 16 Indycar courses will be programmed, although Papyrus says it's possible they may only include eight with the initial product release and put the remaining eight on an add-on datadisk.

Dungeon Master 2: The Legend of Skullkeep

FTL/Interplay

Due out in November

The original Dungeon Master was the game which began it all for first person underground games. Unfortunately, by the time it reached the PC, games such as Ultima Underworld and Wolfenstein had stolen its thunder. However, Dungeon Master 2 promises 256-colour VGA graphics, both indoor and outdoor worlds, a trading section and much more intelligent computer characters — the monsters, for example, can heal themselves after being wounded and will then tell their allies about your presence, making gameplay that bit more challenging.

Pacific Strike

Origin Systems

Release date TBA

Having been just a touch late with Strike Commander and its engine intended to provide a basis for a series of games, Origin has buckled down to get those follow-up games moving.

Far left: Pacific Strike is currently in very early stages of development. Jagannath: Engines of Destruction, left, is a robot stomper, and Star Trek: Next Generation, below left, promises to mix role-playing with flight simulation elements.

Pacific Strike is more of a simulation than the flying game that was Strike Commander. Set, historically accurately, at the time of the attack on Pearl Harbour, you have the chance of flying in all the major Pacific battles of World War II, in a choice of planes, including the Wildcat, Hellcat, and Corsair.

Wing Commander Academy

Origin Systems

Due out in late August

Or, the Wing Commander construction kit. This is a stand-alone product rather than a Wing Commander datadisk, which, quite simply, requires you to design and build your own missions, using the asteroids, minefields, spacecraft (including some new craft, such as the Confederation's Wraith, and the Kilrathi's Jrathek), wingmen, data pods, and so on, provided by the program.The idea is to build missions which you can challenge your friends with, or up- and download tailored missions from bulletin boards.

Star Trek: Next Generation

Spectrum Holobyte

Release date TBA

A lush affair with graphics par excellence, and not to be confused with Interplay's Judgement Rites, below.

Jagannath

MicroProse

Due out in late 1993

This is one of the robots in moon boots games and bears a certain striking similarity to Xenobots as you take on one force of mighty titans and then clang relentlessly against another until good triumphs over evil. Again.

Return to Zork

Activision

Due out in the autumn

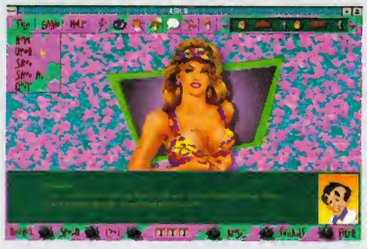
The motives behind Infocom's original Zork games was that they were text-only adventures; that graphics were unnecessary given the detailed, evocative storytelling, and would only

... and soap operas

Leisure Suit Larry 6

Sierra On-Line

Larry has schmoozed his way into La Costa Lotta, an upmarket health spa bursting at the seams with babes for Larry to try out his age-old chat-up lines on.



Number 7

Ahem ... actually, we couldn't find a number seven.

Ultima 8

Origin Systems

An excited Richard Garriott explains the nature of the game thus: "We're going for an isometric view, like Populous but three times bigger. The visual quality and presentation will be of a much higher standard; with the graphics all 3D rendered in 3D Studio. And it won't be set in Britannia, but Pagan, the Guardian's homeland.

"There'll be five main antagonists: the Guardian, plus characters based on the elements, earth, air, fire and water. Also, and this is deliberate, the game itself will be smaller. There'll be 100-200 NPCs [non-playing characters], of whom fewer than 50 will be relevant, as opposed to 300 half-relevant characters as before. There'll be less distance to cover when playing the game, but much more to do, which is something we decided to do following reactions we had from players of Ultima VII."

CD-ROM — now a premier format

CD-ROM is finally beginning to sit up and be noticed in Europe; in the US, it's been around and established for a while longer. But while we've had 'shovelware', the simple transference of disk-based programs to CD, which was mercifully absent at CES, and we've had 'enhanced' versions of existing programs, and we've had the odd one or two CD-ROM originals, the newest trend to emerge at Chicago was the idea of developing a game for CD-ROM, and then cutting out the memory-chewing speech, music and video effects to produce a — 'dehanced', anyone? — disk version (all Sierra's new products, for example). As a theory, this sounds better than bolting on cosmetic extras to a basic game, but the proof will be in the playability of the ensuing disk-based versions (playability still not being entirely CD's strong point).

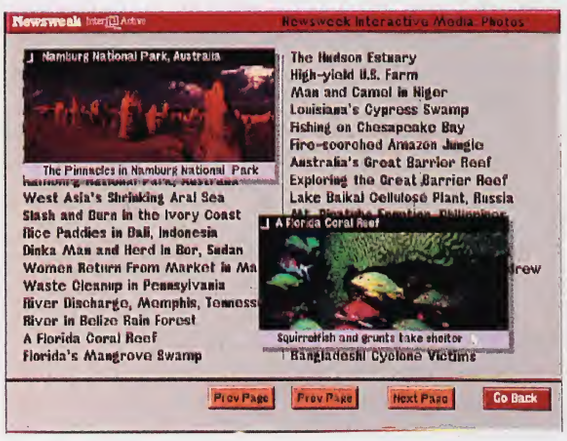
The original Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective sold 225,000 copies worldwide, according to publisher Icom Simulations, which is hoping to keep the momentum going with the release of Volume III in the series. With over an hour of colour motion video, Vol III presents three new cases for Holmes and Watson: The Soliticious Solicitor, The Banker's Final Debt and The Thames Murders — and all sanctioned by the estate of Arthur Conan Doyle.

The Labyrinth (Electronic Arts, to be released in October) is based around the legend of King Minos. Gameplay centres on solving logic puzzles correctly, which will alter later events in the story, taking you through different ages in history. The graphics alone — all 3D rendered — take up over 250Mb.

Alongside the program, the CD version of F15 Strike Eagle also has an on-screen comprehensive history of the aeroplane, and its capabilities, plus a tutorial on radar and weapons. The sound has been enhanced, and gameplay optimised with some extra features.

Other CD-ROM titles in development include Lord of the Rings from Interplay, Battlechess Enhanced (more music, 30 minute animated tutorial), Castles II (with a comprehensive gazetteer and guided tour of famous and ancient castles), the 20th Century Almanac (Software Toolworks, with footage, pictures, and speech for all major world events in a five CD pack), King's Quest VI, as well as all those titles detailed elsewhere in these pages. Space also forbids us to go into any details on the vast number of 'reference book' programs: the encyclopaedias, the art history CDs, the medical dictionaries, the multimedia history of The Beatles, complete with lyric sheets, discography and footage; nor the increasingly number of children's educational programs, such as Broderbund's Just Grandma and Me interactive storybook titles, or Peter and the Wolf.

Newsweek Interactive (Software Toolworks), with updates released quarterly, takes articles from editions of Newsweek magazine, incorporates illustrations, hypertext cross-referencing for more information on key subjects, animated video clips, speech, and includes a library of previous articles from Newsweek and the Washington Post.



slow things down and distract the player. Well, forget all that. Return to Zork is a very sophisticated looking graphic adventure with full motion video clips and over an hour of audio dialogue using professional actors set against computer-generated backgrounds. There's a new cast of characters, an entirely point-and-click interface, camera and recorder functions so that you can make video notes of your progress, and a host of other 1990s widgits that is guaranteed to make original Zork players mount a protest to make Twyford Down look like a picnic.

Return to Zork is, I should stress, a new game (you must save humanity from an evil spirit named Morphius), not a revamp of an existing story, and Activision tells us that Return will "capture the intellectual complexity and wit of the original series". I only hope to God that it does. It's planned for release on floppy disk and CD-ROM, and also, incidentally, 3DO.

Star Trek: Judgement Rites

Interplay

Due out in October

Playing the Star Trek card for all it's worth, Interplay has three Trek variants coming out this autumn: the Aria Listener option for 25th Anniversary, above, this follow-up, and a CD-ROM version of 25th Anniversary with sampled speech from — so far — William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy (DeForest Kelly and James Doohan — Scotty — have yet to sign their contracts, apparently). There are eight new missions in Judgement Rites,

all with 256-colour backgrounds digitised from hand-painted originals, and the slightly chubby renditions of the Enterprise crew familiar from 25th Anniversary.

Return to Zork, far left, uses digitised actors, while the characters in Star Wars Chess, left, were hand-drawn by cartoon artists. Judgement Rites, below left, is the sequel to Star Trek: 25th Anniversary.

Star Wars Chess

Software Toolworks

Due out in October

Toolworks has licensed the characters (and the music) from Lucasfilm's Star Wars series for its animated chess set, with 72 different capture sequences to hold the attention. Professional cartoon artists and animators have been used to draw the characters and the chess engine is the same as the one used in Chessmaster 3000.

Karpov vs Kasparov

In the battle of the chess programs, Electronic Arts' trump card is current world champion Garry Kasparov in Kasparov's Gambit (picture 1), while Software Toolworks is fighting back strongly with the endorsement of Anatoly Karpov for Chessmaster v4 (picture 2)

● Garry Kasparov helped to prepare the tutorial sequences in Kaspariv's Gambit, and appears in video on-screen. Anatoly Karpov will take you through a spoken commentary of ten of his favourite chess matches, but Chessmaster v4 also boasts a 'plain English' tutorial sequence and move analysis feature. Well, plainish, anyway. If you listen closely, the dialogue does give itself away as a patchwork of phrases blended together, but it does make grammatical sense, and it does explain the computer's planned moves clearly, and much more accessibly than a screenful of text.

● Kasparov's Gambit uses the chess engine Socrates II, which won the 1993 International Computer Chess Championship. There's a choice of playing styles available in the program. Chessmaster v4 uses a new 32-bit chess engine.

● Kasparov's Gambit also includes a library of famous chess games, chess quizzes and a rating system for its human players. Chessmaster v4 includes a number of different chess sets in addition to conventional pieces, such as the Jurassic set, Napoleonic characters set, Futuristic (very chromatic and smooth-lined) and Marine characters.

Disney SOFTWARE

Beauty and the BEAST

"Tea for two and two for tea..."

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Fleet Defender

MicroProse

Due out by Christmas

Using the same game engine as F15 Strike Eagle, Fleet Defender is based on the F14 Tomcat, and promises to be an "ultra-realistic" flight simulation. MicroProse has been deep in discussions with navy pilots and officers in order to recreate the flying experience and procedures with this one. It has also been paying attention to presentation, with all scenery texture-mapped and shaded, and accurate flight modelling.

Sim City 2000

Maxis

Due out by Christmas

With graphic enhancements which make it look similar to A-Train, although Maxis representative Lois Tilles insists the graphic routines were developed by Maxis in-house, Sim City 2000 boasts a number of new features designed to bring your towns into the modern age. Most important, for current Sim City owners, is compatibility: your saved towns from the original Sim City can be imported straight into Sim City 2000 and will appear on-screen complete with the 2000 facelift. Other new options include provision for adding mountains, forests, rivers, streams, waterfalls and bays to the terrain, and there's new host of new city services: schools and universities, zoos, museums, hospitals, prisons, marinas and motorways, which can be built into the community. To ease the traffic jams which always seem to be inevitable, you can also now build underground for an improved rail and road network. Plus, of course, all the disasters are there and graphically enhanced.

Variations on a theme

You can't fail to have noticed here that there are a certain amount of variations on a theme here, with the Star Trek assortment potentially being the most confusing.

Spectrum Holobyte's Next Generation has been sired by an entirely different licence to Interplay's 25th Anniversary and its sequel Judgement Rites. 25th Anniversary will shortly be available in three distinct versions: the original, as released last year, on CD-ROM and in the three-mission pack with the Aria Listener device. All clear?

Then there are the Sim Cities: Interplay's CD-ROM version of the Maxis original includes video footage (including a number of Interplay employees as 'extras') for effect. Instead of being told via a dialogue box that the sims are unhappy with the tax levels, now you get a video box of the ensuing street demonstration. You can also import old saved cities from any computer format on to your hard drive to use in the CD version)

Maxis, the original Sim City publisher, is currently working on the updated version, Sim City 2000 on disk, as detailed above, but, just to add to the Sim variants, Interplay is also at the early stages of putting SimAnt on to CD-ROM, with some quite nauseatingly large and squelchy looking ants on screen, and a queen ant with the 'witty' name of Simantha. Finally, you will also soon have the opportunity to play Sim City on the move using a light-pen as the main player interface (see

Quirks and oddities

Screenies

Take a good look at this picture. Someone has decorated a neat cardboard template and attached it to their monitor. There are over 50 different designs in the Screenies catalogue, and they're coming across the Atlantic this autumn, ready to fit 13", 14" and 15" monitors and retailing, in the US, at any rate, at $11.95 (around £7.50). Don't the Americans know we have Blue Peter over here for this sort of thing?

PenPoint Sim City

Now this is more like it. With a PenPoint mobile computer, you can control Sim City with the attached pen. Just draw in your power lines, your roads, or tap on-screen to build up the residential areas or set up a power plant. Distributor Ink Development claims that, "Sim City will do for mobile computing what Tetris did for the Gameboy", but one suspects that the hardware isn't exactly widespread at the moment. Still, if you do have access to a Samsung Penmaster, NEC Versa, Toshiba Dynanote or compatible system, then you too could be drawing up Sim City this autumn.

The Modern Bride Wedding Planner

Whether Virgin Games chooses to release this in the UK is something of a moot point, but it sounds pretty indispensable. Not only does the Planner remember everything: who's doing what, items to be ticked off the list, help with seating plans — you can even use the program to print out seat placing cards — how much it's all going to cost, plus tips on wedding etiquette, but it also includes tracks of CD quality music to help you decide what should be played at the wedding itself. Probably draws up the pre-nuptial agreement, as well.

The Wolfenstein dynasty

"Inspired by Wolfenstein" must be well on its way to becoming a 1993 catchphrase. Fast-moving, first-person perspective, wall-crashing, exploration games are in, in a big way. Here then, are some wonderful Wolfenstein wannabes:

Shadowcaster

Origin Systems

Written by Raven Software, this actually uses an adapted version of the Wolfenstein game engine, despite some on-screen similarities to Ultima Underworld. The big 'feature' here is your character's ability to change shape to adapt to gameplay conditions — thus, to change into an aquatic frogman when you need to travel through water, or into a flying fire-breathing dragon if the ground's too rough underfoot, or into a large robot-like fighter for defeating beasties that only understand a good drubbing.

Forgotten Castle

Twin Dolphin Games

Ah yes ... 3D modelling, stereo sound, first person perspective role-playing in the dungeons beneath a mediaeval castle with fantasy monsters and a truckload of bad guys.

Secret of the 7th Labyrinth

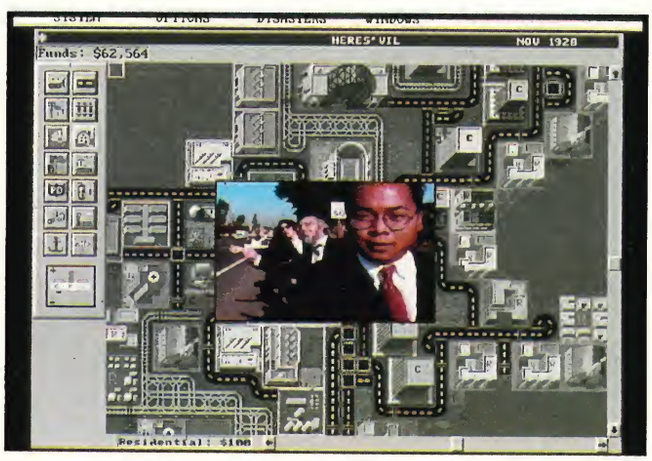
MicroProse

Zoom around killing things and make sure you do it fast. Labyrinth is set in seven dungeons each representing one of world's lost civilisations. Aside from the similarities of presentation to Wolfenstein, Labyrinth's little extras are the stairs and angled walls built into the scenery, which you can build up or dismantle yourself in a map editor, to give you your own custom-built labyrinth.

panel opposite). In flogging terms, it would appear that reports of these particular horses' deaths are much exaggerated.

Then there are the two CD-ROM Draculas — from Icom and Psygnosis, which really shouldn't be confused with each other. Psygnosis's effort is, unfortunately, a conversion of a Sega shoot 'em up, while. Icom's Dracula Unleashed is another matter: all lush interiors and dramatic Gothic close ups.

And as if all this weren't enough, there are also a lot of robots in moon boots around. Xenobots does have rather a lot to answer for. Courtesy of Jagannath from MicroProse, Inferno from Ocean (which, confusingly, used to be known as Odyssey — see News pages), and our own home-grown Rise of the Robots from Mirage, you get the distinct feeling there's a robot template kicking aroud the development houses at the moment, and they're all using it.



Left: Sim City on CD-ROM gives you a video representation of your performance as mayor by your sims. Also Fleet defender, top left, and Sim City 2000, above left.

Disney SOFTWARE

Beauty and the BEAST

"A candlelit dinner and then you will see..."

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Learn about the mechanics of your dream car, then build the 1:24 scale model, with 3D instructions and everything you need to know about the art of model-making. And then drive in one of the fastest racing simulations around. One lucky winner gets the Revell Motor Stars kit and a spanking new internal CD-ROM drive. Five runners-up receive a Porsche Slant Nose Motor Stars CD-ROM kit. What more could you want, short of the real thing?

Model-maker Revell is taking plastic kits into the computer multimedia age with a range of four model cars to be released later this month; the Bugatti EB110, the Porsche 911 Slant Nose, the BMW Nazca M12 and the Lamborghini LP500S.

The Motor Stars series feature a top quality plastic model car kit (1:24 scale) and CD-ROM disc, and retails at £59.95. The CD-ROM includes complete instructions, diagrams, hints and all sorts of advanced construction tips for the model kit (which for this competition will be the Porsche Slant Nose).

And when you need a break from the hard work of sticking your bits together, the CD-ROM comes complete with a fast action arcade-style racing game developed by Revell and Floyd Design in the US.

Revell plans to release further CD-ROM modelling packages by Christmas this year, with the next in line being a series of high-tech aircraft kits, classic American cars, dinosaurs and space themes.

Rules

No entries received after the competition date will be considered.
Only one entry per person, please.
No employees, relatives or associates of Revell, Emap Images, or any companies involved in the arrangements for this competition are eligible to enter.
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How to enter

Life's a lot easier off the race track than on it; all you need to do to win Revell's Motor Stars and CD-ROM drive is answer the three not-too-difficult questions below.

The questions

1. Which team won the Formula One constructor's championship in 1992?
2. For which film star's team does Nigel Mansell currently drive?
3. Name the four cars in the Revell Motor Stars series.

Simply write the answers on the form provided, stick the form on the back of a postcard or sealed envelope, and send your entry to:

Motor Stars competition

PC Review
Priory Court
30-32 Farringdon Lane
London EC1R 3AU

Your entry must arrive by August 15th, 1993 in order to be put in the draw for prizes.

Please note: The Motor Stars CD-ROM package needs a minimum of a 386SX PC, 4Mb of RAM, DOS 5.0, CD-ROM drive, mouse, 13Mb of hard disk space and SVGA graphics to run. The kit is supplied without paint and glue. The first prize winner will also need a spare 5.25" drive slot to fit the CD-ROM drive into.

Motor Stars competition

The answers are:

1. .....
2. .....
3. .....
Name .....
Address .....
.....

❑ Tick this box if you do not wish to receive any further information from companies associated with this competition.

Closing date August 15, 1993

PC Review August 1993

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Games without frontiers?

War games have been popular for centuries, but haven't made much of an impact on the PC. Simon Shaw looks at the latest in carefully calculated death and destruction to see if things are about to change

It would be something of an understatement to say that war games have a serious image problem; in fact, the general perception is that they're about the dullest brand of screen entertainment to have hit us since the advent of breakfast television. There are a number of possible reasons for the low esteem in which they are held, but two in particular strike me as being especially plausible.

The first is the ethical explanation. War is hell and it's not hard to spot the irony in the combination of those two words, 'war' and 'game'. As all tabloid readers know, it only takes one frame a day of Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker to turn even mild-mannered Clark Kent types into raving epileptic sociopaths, so how potentially lethal does that make your average military simulation, particularly in these days of high-resolution graphics? Never before have so few had the technological capacity to blow up so many, but is this conducive to mental health and a general sense of social well-being? War games can glamorise war, and especially in the case of simulations of recent conflicts (I'm thinking of the spate of Gulf War releases) there is an uncomfortable blurring between fiction and reality. We've all seen the newsreels and real human beings died there — is this fit subject matter for a game? I'll return to this question later, but for now I'd like to consider a second, and altogether more prosaic, explanation for the low regard in which war games are generally held.

It is this: war games really are what they're cracked up to be; that is, they really are as dull as everyone says they are.

There is, unfortunately, a great deal of inescapable truth in this. At the end of this article, I will offer a recommended selection of eight games, and, although naturally subjective, this list was arrived at after several months of exhaustive and frequently exhausting games testing. Eight may seem like a somewhat arbitrary number to choose, but in fact it's pretty close to my ceiling; the point is that the final eight, and the initial shortlist, were pretty much one and the same.

And quite frankly, considering the price of computer games, this scenario is little short of scandalous. So just how has this sorry state of affairs come to pass?

If there is a simple explanation it's probably to do with the perception of war games as appealing only to a minority interest group. We're talking niche market here, and, if the manufacturers are to be believed (and they've done the research) there is very little cross-over amongst us, their customers, meaning that, for example, adventure types don't like flight sims, and vice versa. I have to confess that this surprises me. My own preference is for strategy games usually, but that doesn't make me completely averse to the occasional dangerous spot of dungeoneering or dogfighting. But this, apparently, is atypical. Not only should we poor computer games players be classified generally as hopeless addicts; we are also, it would appear, monomaniacal fanatics with tunnel vision.

What this means, I think, is that you pays your money, you takes your choice, and you put up with what you're used to putting up with. Adventures and flight sims have big markets, there's a lot of competition and customers won't stand for poor quality gameplay and graphics. War gamers have a much more limited choice and, consequently, must be grateful for scraps from the rich man's table. This may be an exaggeration, but it's not an outrageous one.

We should bear in mind, though, that it was not ever thus, and this is something which gives me cause for optimism about the war game's future. Bridgett Hirst of US Gold makes a telling point. Not so long ago, she reminded me, adventure games occupied a small niche market and were considered 'not quite respectable. Then along came Eye of the Beholder and suddenly people who had never played adventure games saw it and thought, "Hey, I wouldn't mind a go at that."' I think we can allow Bridgett her PR plug and admit that Beholder was a mould-breaking game which did establish a significant benchmark and heralded an explosion in the market (though

Underworld would be a better analogy today). The question is, when, if ever, are we going to get the war gaming equivalent?

The answer may be quite soon. A lot of manufacturers seem to be turning their attention to the genre at last, and a greater than usual number of new releases has been promised for the latter part of the year. Of course, that doesn't mean they'll be any good, but then again if MicroProse's Fields of Glory is anything to go by, they just might be.

Fields of Glory is a simulation of Napoleon's last campaign. It is map-based, but with an angled overhead view of attractively-uniformed figures moving across a sculpted terrain, rather than the usual 2D symbols. It is, in fact, very like a tabletop war game with miniatures, and why nothing like it has been attempted before one can only wonder at (I gloss politely over superficially similar attempts from other manufacturers).

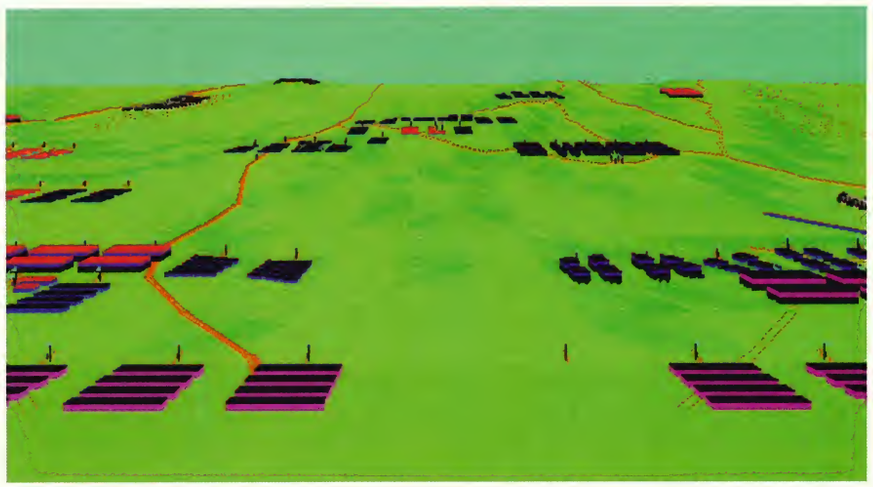
Fields of Glory is due for release shortly. In the meantime, I have only seen an early demonstration copy, so a thorough evaluation is out of the question. But the first impression is highly favourable, and that in itself is sufficiently rare to be worthy of comment. Aesthetically, war games all too often suffer the most undignified of double whammies: not only are dull games boring to play, but even good games look dull. Why? I've been playing war games in various formats for 20 years or more, and it's obvious that they make perfect material for computer adaptation. However, until recently, I have hardly seen a single product which seems to me as well made and presented, and as enjoyable to play, as the better board war games. The question, for me, has not just been one of 'When are we going to see the equivalent of Eye of the Beholder?', but a more fundamental one of 'When are we going to see anything as good and as exciting to play as Russian Campaign or Squad Leader'?

Well, I think I may have found the answer to that particular question. I've been impressed by a number of products in the last year or so, particularly UbiSoft's Perfect General and Bluebyte's Historyline, both of which are highly attractive and accessible. However, the outstanding recent release for me has been the series of second world war games from 360-Pacific marketed generically under the title V for Victory. I have to confess that this series (so far comprising Utah Beach, Velikye Luki and Market Garden, with a fourth game to join the series shortly) has taken me completely by surprise. A small ingestion of humble pie is now required: not so long ago I offered my firm opinion in the pages of this very magazine that the days of the traditional board-inspired computer war game must be all but numbered. I had not seen the V for Victory series when I made this rash prophecy, and I withdraw it, though conditionally. There is life in the old format yet.

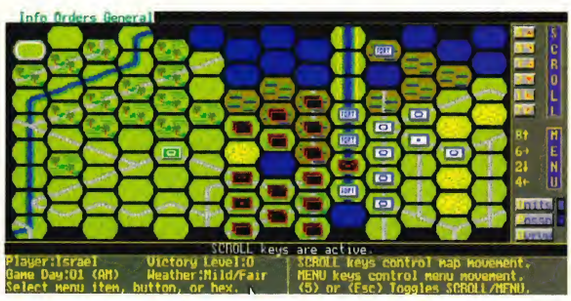
When I loaded up the first of the trilogy to come my way (it happened to be Velikye Luki) my initial reaction was, "Oh no, not another hex war game ..." Well, that of course is precisely what it is, but the presence of a few hexagons no more defines the common characteristics of games than do the suits in a set of playing cards: the difference between V for V and much of what I've seen is the difference between Bridge and Snap.

The first thing you notice about V for V is the outstanding SVGA graphics. We may be looking at a hex map with 2D playing pieces, but the freshness and crispness of detail put it into a class of its own. For a game to be a pleasure to look at doesn't make it a pleasure to play; but it helps.

The second thing which you will notice about V for V is that it appears to be very complicated. It is. The manual is thick and mastering the rules takes time. This may put people off, and I wouldn't recommend it to complete beginners, but all subtle strategy games take time, it's a measure of their appeal and longevity. The question is, 'How smooth is the learning curve?' In this case, very smooth indeed.



Peter Turcan's Napoleonic trilogy (Waterloo shown above) pioneered the 3D terrain and commander's-eye-view approach. The troops are represented by blocks and the graphics are rudimentary, but the perspective gives a realistic feel to the battles that's necessarily lacking in a 2D map game. Microprose's brand new Fields of Glory takes this a step further by illustrating the troop types figuratively. It's a long overdue development, and may herald a popular new lease of life for the computer war game.



Hex grids come in a variety of disguises, as these screen shots illustrate: the left hand one (SSI's Conflict: Middle East) is an example of the traditional style which can so deter outsiders. The middle picture (from SSI's Pacific War) shows a concealed hex grid: the thick black borders are gone and only tiny dots remain to identify the squares. Unfortunately, it looks like your screen has just caught measles. The right hand picture is from the V for Victory series, and shows the hex system subtly camouflaged. What's off-putting about many war games is not the hexes, but the poor quality graphics.

In Velikye Luki, seven progressively more difficult scenarios are on offer. Seven may not sound like many, but the last, the Campaign, is a monster (the estimated 90 hours playing time seems a little on the conservative side to me). The trick is to continue playing the first and easiest scenario over and over again until you've cracked it. Mouse control is reassuringly easy and intuitive, and alternate bouts of trial and error and manual reading should gradually make things clear.

Incidentally, the game boasts a handy learning feature of such devastating but classic simplicity that I'm astonished it hasn't been seized upon by everyone: the first time selected functions are chosen, a manual reference page is flashed up on the screen, so that particular rule sections can be all the more easily digested in bite-size chunks. Talk about having your hand held; these rules practically caress you into submission.

Ease of learning is one thing, but once you've got on top of the game mechanisms, what do you find? The answer is one of the most complete, detailed and realistic engines in the whole computer entertainment market. Unlike many of its competitors, V for Victory knows precisely at what level it is pitched. The player acts as an army commander, controlling one or more corps which in turn comprise a number of divisions or, occasionally, independent brigades. In general, basic units are battalion size, and represent all known troop types from armour to infantry with occasional exotica such as bridging companies or commandos. Regimental and divisional integrity are also significant factors and, along with the subtle supply rules, greatly encourage historically accurate deployments.

Supply, in fact, is the key, which is exactly as it should be in any modern war game. There is only a limited amount of material (ammunition, fuel, etc) available each day, and it must be shared carefully around the HQs. You could, for example, set a spearhead division at attack level for the day, thus greatly enhancing its offensive capabilities, but that will almost certainly mean setting other divisional levels at minimal, which reduces their defensive strength and makes them vulnerable to the enemy. Add in rules to cover intelligence, air power, morale, fatigue and disruption, three types of movement and a vast array of topographical and climatic features, and you have the most comprehensive and accurate military simulation commercially available. If this sounds like hyperbole, I make no excuse. I think that the V for Victory series is a triumph of design.

The artificial intelligence isn't bad either. This is the Achilles heel of strategy games, and as a rule I think it's always best to play when possible against a human opponent, preferably by null modem unless you have substantial shares in British Telecom. However, if you play V for V against the computer it'll give you a fight, particularly if you stack the various play options against yourself. (This, incidentally, is an excellent way of tinkering with the balance of a game: instead of following the more usual and arbitrary method of setting difficulty levels you are offered a choice of random variants based on historical possibilities, such as an extra division or two, or more air power). In a lot of war games, the computer opponent often seems just to lash out at any and all adjacent units, but not here: I've been particularly impressed by the crafty way that the 'enemy' has declined to bash away blindly at my strong points, but has instead constantly probed and felt for my weak flanks. I'm about half way through the Velikye Luki campaign at the moment, and it's every bit as sprawling, fluid and volatile as it ought to be. In fact, it's been more than difficult dragging myself away for a long enough of period to write this article, which is probably the highest accolade that I could give it.

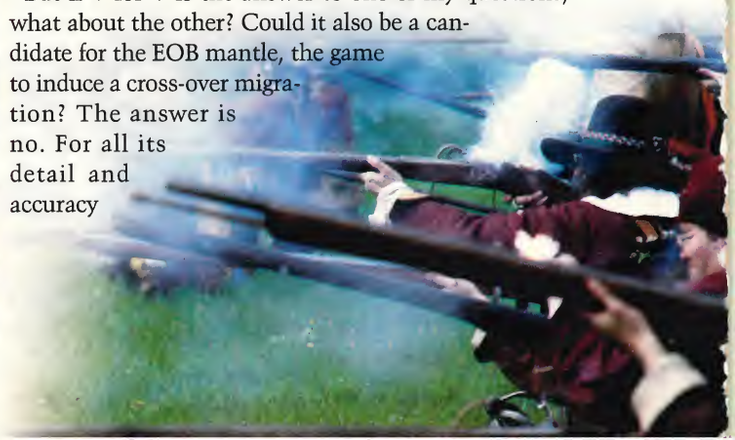
But if V for V is the answer to one of my questions, what about the other? Could it also be a candidate for the EOB mantle, the game to induce a cross-over migration? The answer is no. For all its detail and accuracy

A short history of the war game

Although games with toy soldiers go back to the ancient world, and monarchs such as Frederick the Great are known to have fought miniature battles in childhood, the concept of the modern war game, or kriegspiel, derives from Napoleonic times and a Prussian officer called von Reisswitz. Von Reisswitz's kriegspiel saw a radical departure from earlier grid-type games, substituting scale relief maps for squares and using blocks to represent substantial military units rather than individual pieces. Troops were moved according to their real-life capabilities, and conflicts were assessed and resolved by umpires, who took into account the effects of terrain, morale, etc. Naturally, all of the players were military men. The professional kriegspiel continued to develop throughout the 19th century and has remained an important military tool in the modern era. The Japanese used detailed war games as part of their preparation for Pearl Harbor. Later, it is said that the results of a war game prior to Midway were overruled when the Americans were adjudged to have caught Japanese aircraft refuelling on their carriers' decks, and to have scored an embarrassingly comprehensive victory. This, of course, was exactly what happened when the battle was fought for real.

The war game, however, has not been solely the province of the professionals. It is not widely known, but H G Wells was a keen war gamer and wrote a seminal book on the subject called Little Wars, in which he described his subject matter as appealing to boys of all ages and 'to the more intelligent type of girl', a remark unlikely to be quoted on the back cover of Virago's edition of Ann Veronica. Wells' system was hardly sophisticated, but the basic elements of model soldiers on a scaled-down 3D terrain would be familiar to modern war gamers. War games quickly found their way on to computers, but have been most heavily influenced by the hex-dominated board format, itself a relatively recent innovation.

For anyone wishing to combine the number-crunching, book-keeping power of the computer with the aesthetic appeal of model figures, there are a number of 'battlefield management' systems on the market. Easily the best that I've seen is the Napoleonic Hard Pounding from English Computer War games, who also produce an 18th century program. (ECW is on 021 458 2372).



(and indeed because of it) V for V will be of specialist interest only, because unless you've played war games before and are seriously into them you simply won't have a clue where to begin. If, on the other hand, you wanted to dip your toe in the water with a game like Historyline and then found you were hooked, V for V would be a fascinating challenge. Historyline, indeed, may be the closest thing currently to an EOB lookalike. It doesn't quite fit the bill, but find someone to fight against in two-player mode and you'd be hard pressed not to have fun.

And the issue of fun brings me back to where I started.

There is a debate brewing on the subject of morality and violence in entertainment software and this is one area which could hardly expect to escape notice. Should we be playing war games at all? Why do we want to play them? I can only answer for myself, but good games, like good drama, are essentially about conflict. If the competitive element is diffused you can still get a game (one thinks of Maxis and their 'software toys') but it usually lacks bite. I prefer to pit my wits against an opponent, but trust that I have sufficient common sense to know where the game ends and reality begins. I've frequently made fortunes with hotels on Mayfair and Park Lane but so far I've distinctly failed to turn into a capitalist tycoon. In the same way, I'm not aware of having developed bloodthirsty tendencies through playing war games, though I have occasionally felt like exterminating the vendors of over-priced junk software (I'm only human).

I would genuinely like to be able to derive the same intense enjoyment from playing something ecologically sensitive to do with saving rainforests, but I cannot. This may be due to personal inadequacy, or it may be a mere reflection of reality. "The condition of man," wrote Thomas Hobbes, "is a condition of war of everyone against everyone".

Selective quotation of dead philosophers is no justification for anything, but the very existence of such a thing as the war game is only the result of an historical fact. Horrible though it is, war is fascinating, and putting oneself in the shoes of famous generals is a stimulating challenge. But it's only a mental challenge; there's no blood. Another quotation, a famous one from Thomas Hardy: "My argument is that War makes rattling good history; but Peace is poor reading." My argument is that it can make for a rattling good game too. *(See over the page for a detailed list of war games currently on the market.)*

About hexes

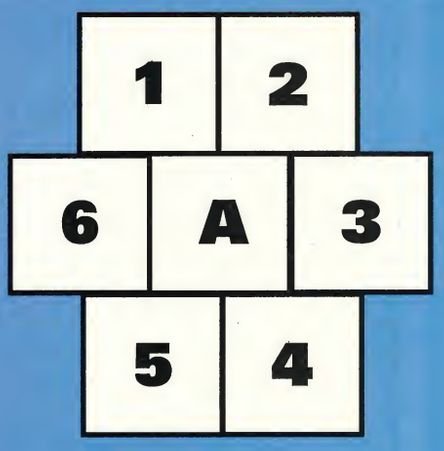
The sight of a hex grid can put people off war games in much the same way as cabbalistic symbols are supposed to ward off the Evil Eye — the mere glimpse of a six-sided overlay somehow suggests the abstract, the complex, and the obscure. Experience does seem all too often to bear this unfortunate impression out, but that's down to cumbersome game engines, not to the hexagonal grid, which is only a convention after all.

Early war games were always based on square-grid systems (like giant chess boards) but this is unsuitable in realistic games because of the problem of diagonals. Imagine that one square represents 1km by 1km and that unit A is a regiment of a thousand men.

If A wishes to move into squares 1 or 3 then it must 'cross over' a line representing 1km in length, which is fair enough. If, however, it wants to move directly to square 2, then it must cross over a point, a physical and logical impossibility.

One solution to this problem was the off-square grid (like bricks in a wall) where unit A can move into any of six adjacent squares.

This led, sensibly enough, to a regular hexagonal system (though octagons have also been tried). Like most conventions it's imperfect (the crab-like movement of pieces looks odd) but it's the best compromise going in any game where it's important to define how and when units occupy a particular area in space.



Desert island war games

The principal inspiration for choosing eight games is Desert Island Discs. Alter the spelling to 'disks' and a tempting fantasy emerges: imagine being marooned with a state-of-the-art Pentium 586, with a 1Gb hard disk, 32Mb of RAM, CD-ROM, sound card, maths co-processor, mouse and joystick of your choice, etc. Now imagine that you can choose only eight games in all to load; it certainly concentrates the mind!

Before listing my own choices one important question needs to be answered: what precisely is a war game?

An 18th century forerunner of the modern kriegspiel was described as "chess with a thousand pieces". Does that make chess a war game? Great generals have often been likened to grand masters, and chess can be viewed as a territorial and material conflict, with a clear strategical objective and well-defined tactical permutations. However, its essence is abstract and metaphorical, it is not a realistic representation of conflict, and I think that disqualifies it. My Concise Oxford Dictionary says: "Kriegspiel, n. War game in which blocks representing troops, etc, are moved about on maps."

What then about flight sims? Often you have to plot map movements methodically before entering into combat, and surely a game in which the flight element is both the means and the end (eg, Space Shuttle) cannot be of the same species as Secret Weapons of the Luftwaffe, where flight is merely the means to another quite different end, ie, the wanton destruction of the enemy? Yet wherever in the trade pages of this magazine you see games advertised by type, you will invariably find these titles alongside each other. With some reluctance, I am going to pass on flight sims, if only because they have an established identity and are sufficiently well written up already.

Other games in my list, though, operate on clearly similar principles (map leading to combat; what I call 'warcade' games), so I accept that I'm being inconsistent. Science fiction is another grey area which I've decided to avoid, though I was tempted by Virgin's excellent Dune 2. In general, I've tried to keep the criteria of maps and realism (even if alternative) loosely in mind rather than shackling myself with a hard and fast definition. My only other consideration has been the need for some variety. Keen war gamers may be surprised at the omission of any of the heavyweight SSI products from my list. It's hard not to be impressed by the scale and detail of monster games such as Pacific War, but they're not user friendly and are let down by poor presentation and graphics. Apparently SSI is working on this and plans to introduce SVGA graphics in the future.

In the meantime, afficionados of the style (of whom there are many) will be pleased to hear that Gary Grigsby is working on his third (and definitive) simulation of the Russian campaign.

Accessibility ratings

★★★	**High**
★★	**Average**
★	**Low**

These grades are an indication of the accessibility of the game, not necessarily of its complexity and difficulty. Three star games will appeal most to beginners; one star is the province of the seriously committed.

1. Perfect General ★★★ (Ubisoft, £39.99)

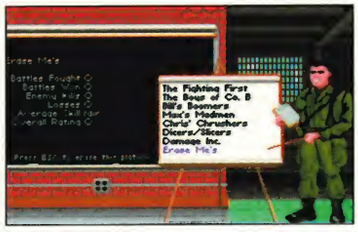
A hypothetical, modern land-based game fought on attractive maps with a concealed hex grid. Easy to pick up and fun to play, it uses a points system whereby the player pays the cost of unit types from infantry (cheap) to heavy armour (expensive) on a per scenario basis. Perfect General's chief drawback is the limited number of maps. It also cries out for some kind of do it yourself expansion disk with a random terrain generator.

2. Historyline ★★★ (Blue Byte, £39.99)

Although purporting to be based on the 1914-18 war, HL is scarcely any more realistic than its sci-fi predecessor Battle Isle. The same fixed map structure as Perfect General, but a lot more maps (48 in all, some truly massive). Marvellous graphics and atmosphere. Artificial intelligence is poor, but the unique split-screen design makes the 2-player mode outstanding. Very little to choose between this and the new Battle Isle 1.5; it's a matter of personal taste.

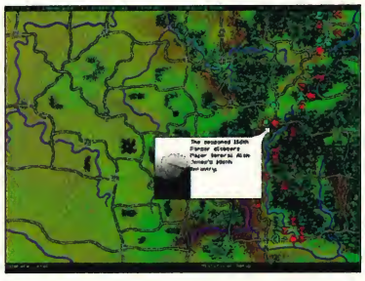
3. M1 Tank Platoon ★★ (XL/US Gold, £14.99)

Almost geriatric by today's standards, with low-resolution graphics and limited scenario potential, this still gets my vote every time as the best in the tactical/arcade style. The Team Yankee series is the only other serious contender, but M1 is more exciting and atmospheric, though the controls take some getting used to. Nowadays on a budget label, and excellent value for money.



4. Patton Strikes Back ★★ (EA, £39.99)

Chris Crawford's Battle of the Bulge simulation (a popular subject – watch out for MicroProse's forthcoming version) is an attractive war game filled with interesting ideas. Unusually, there is a concealed square grid, but the important feature is the road system ("the greatest study of war is the road net", Patton himself wrote). Some realism has been deliberately sacrificed to playability; consequently it's not difficult to get to grips with. Presentation and graphics are excellent.



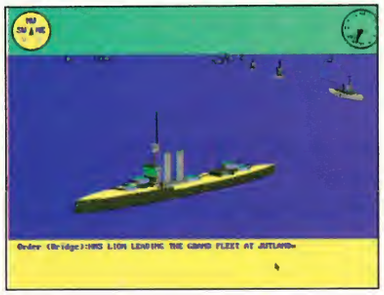
5. Great Naval Battles (SSI, £39.99)

SSI's WW2 naval game just gets my vote ahead of Microprose's Task Force 1942. You control the great capital ships of the Royal Navy and the Kriegsmarine (Bismarck, Prince of Wales, etc) in battles ranging from single ship duels to full fleet actions, manoeuvring on a large-scale map before bringing your massive gun batteries to bear. The

designer, Ed Bever, is a man to watch. His earlier ACW game, No Greater Glory, though flawed, showed a genuinely original approach to the problems of the computer war game.

6. Dreadnoughts (Turcan Research, £34.95)

And talking of original approaches brings us to Peter Turcan, who has long been ploughing a lone furrow through the unimaginative wastes of the market. His games simulate the problems of command and control and are probably too dry for action fans.



Dreadnoughts is the best of them, and it puts you on the bridge of the Great War generation of capital ships. More cumbersome than Great Naval Battles (although the parser control system has been greatly improved).

Turcan's earlier Napoleonic battles have just been rereleased in a three-game package fromOn-Line titled, surprisingly enough, Napoleonics.

7. Velikye Luki ★ (Electronic Arts, £34.99)

I choose the second of the V for Victory trio simply because it's the one I know best; I would happily take all three. For a war game to be realistic is one thing, to be playable quite another. This is both.

Unfortunately, it will only appeal to the committed; the rest

of you will just have to take my word for it that this is one of the best and most intelligently designed programs in the market.

If I could select only one game from the list, this would be it. (The fourth game in the series will be out shortly from EA.)

8. Fields of Glory ★★ (MicroProse, £TBA)

A bit of a cheat, this, as it's not yet out. However, from what I've seen of MicroProse's simulation of the battles up to and including Waterloo, the jaded computer war game format may be about to receive a much needed shot in the arm.

Microprose has gone for a graphical representation of the battlefield rather than using hex grids, so this game could prove a welcome introduction to the genre for non war game afficionados. Not enough information to suggest any sort of final mark, but it looks highly playable.

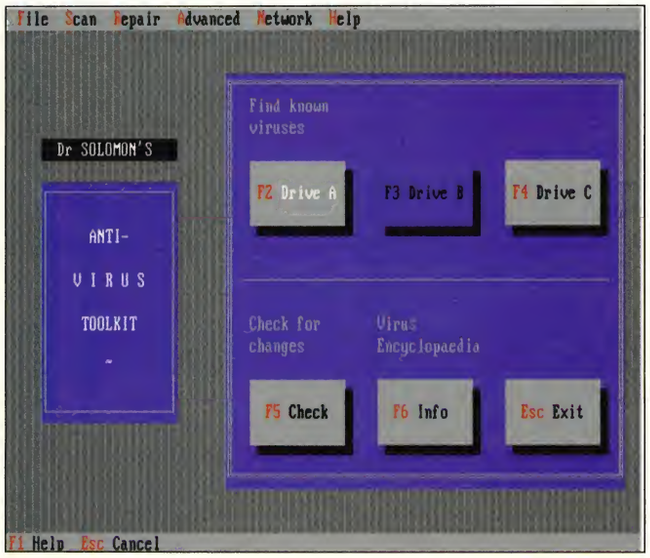
The company plans to release a whole series of 'action strategy games' (they don't like using 'war game' to describe Fields of Glory ...) covering various conflicts, all based on the same engine. Look out for the full review in next month's issue.

PC war games

Company	Telephone	Current war game titles
Blue Byte/Kompart	(0235) 832939	History Line, Battle Isle 93
Broderbund (Electronic Arts)	(0753) 549442	Patton Strikes Back
Empire	(081) 343 7337	War in the Gulf, Campaign Mission Editor, Pacific Islands, Team Yankee, Twilight 2000, Campaign, Campaign II, Combat Classics
Futura (US Gold)	(021) 325 3366	D-Day
Impressions	(071) 351 2133	Rorke's Drift, Samurai — Way of the Warrior, Great Napoleonic Battles, Cohort 2, The Charge of the Light Brigade, Rules of Engagement 2
Microprose	(0666) 504326	Fields of Glory, Special Forces, Task Force 1942
On-Line	(081) 558 6114	Napoleonics, R T Smith's War Game Compendium
SSI (US Gold)	(021) 625 3366	Great Naval Battles, A Line In The Sand, Carrier Strike, Conflict in Korea, Conflict in the Middle East, Clash of Steel, No Greater Glory, Gary Grigsby's War in Russia
Three-Sixty (Electronic Arts)	(0753) 549442	V For Victory series (four titles), Harpoon, Harpoon data disks
Turcan Research Systems	(071) 625 8455	Dreadnoughts (and two naval scenario disks), Borodino, Gettysburgh, Armada, Waterloo
Ubisoft		The Perfect General
XL (US Gold)	(021) 625 3366	M1 Tank Platoon

Safer software

Mike James took a lot of the mystery and menace out of the subject of viruses back in our May issue. Now John Bennett looks at some of the best-known PC protection programs



Below: Dr Soloman's Anti-Virus Toolkit has an easy-to-use menu-driven interface. Simply key in the option you require.

So you think your PC may have been infected by a virus? Before you consider buying anti-virus software to confirm the fact and repair the damaged files, it is important that you have done something about backing up the data on your hard disk. You are far more likely to lose data because of a disk failure than a virus attack. If you have secured your data with a good back-up utility (or, better but more expensive, a back-up device) then you could move on to consider measures against virus attack.

There are three general types of defence against viruses — scanners, checksummers and security blockers.

A scanner has a database of known virus fingerprints. These are patterns of data that are characteristic of the virus. There are lots of virus scanners on the market and there are two things to consider when buying one. The first is how extensive and accurate is their database of known viruses, and secondly, how it is updated.

Most virus scanners claim to detect a given number of viruses but it is usually difficult to compare such claims because of the double counting of viruses with multiple names! Checksummers work by detecting changes to the files on a disk. They read every file and calculate a value that depends on what is in the file. If the file changes then this will cause the value to change and this will be detected at the next scan. This approach makes it possible to detect all sorts of unauthorised modifications to existing files. The problem is that it gives no clue as to the cause, nor what to do about it.

Security blockers are memory resident programs, which are designed to stay active while the PC toddles about its day to day business, and attempt to stop or at least detect unauthorised access to the hard disk. They generally try to stop access to the boot and partition sectors and stop any attempt at formatting the disk. Such programs are not difficult to defeat, but at least they stop accidental re-formatting of a hard disk — which must be at least as common a way of losing data as a virus attack!

Anti-virus software usually has elements of all three of these approaches rolled into one or two utilities. Many packages, especially the unregistered versions of shareware products, stop at virus detection. Some of the packages come with an encyclopaedia of known viruses and how to get rid of them — this is obviously a sensible approach to the problem.

Anti-virus software works by detecting the virus before it's had the chance to do any harm, telling you all about it and, optionally, removing the infection. Some viruses are harder than others to get rid of, so quite often the best remedy is simply to delete the infected file and replace it with a *clean* back-up copy. As Mike James pointed out, making back-ups, operating with non-pirated, write-protected disks and taking care to avoid boot sector viruses, are as important as choosing the right type of anti-virus software.

MS-DOS 6.0

Microsoft includes its own anti-virus sotware in DOS 6.0 — actually a stripped-down version of the Central Point package, as are most of the utilities. Consequently, extra coverage may be a bit OTT for single users.

It isn't the best, most complete protection by any means, and updates to protect from new viruses may be a problem, but the chances of something coming along that it can't cope with in one, carefully used, home PC are pretty small.

The anti-virus packages that follow use a variety of methods and also achieve differing success rates against virus infection. Since I try not to have a great number of viruses just hanging around as a rule, we've borrowed the expertise of our sister magazine, What Personal Computer, and, more importantly, its technical guru Roger Gann and his 3,000-strong library of computer viruses to put the software through its paces

Doctor Solomon's Anti-Virus Toolkit

S&S International (0442) 877877

DOS-version; £99 for quarterly updates

Doctor Soloman's Anti-Virus Toolkit is probably the best known anti-virus software on the PC (possibly something to do with the 'Dr' bit tagged on the front, always reassuring ...).

It's a complete suite of anti-virus utilities (a TSR monitor, scanner and an integrity checker), with signature information on over 2,500 virus strains and trojan programs, which is considerably more than either the Norton or Central Point packages can offer.

All three utilities can be run from DOS or Windows, but VirusGuard (the monitor) has to be loaded into Autoexec.bat, rather than Config.sys. This is a weak point because a virus could get into memory before VirusGuard is loaded at boot up. On the plus side, the virus scanner is extremely small, occupying only 6K of memory. This is always a blessing as you struggle to eke out every byte for the latest hungry ofering from from Origin, MicroProse, et al.

The FindVirus utility is a very quick operator, even under Windows, and the addition of the on-line Virus Encyclopaedia (specially for PC hypochondriacs) is a very handy addition, giving thumbnail details on a vast number of viruses and their effects.

Dr Soloman is very straightforward to set up, install and use, with quick start guides to get you up and running straight away. But the bottom line is that it's very accurate, finding and recognising over 90 percent of the 3,000-odd test viruses, and all of the common ones.

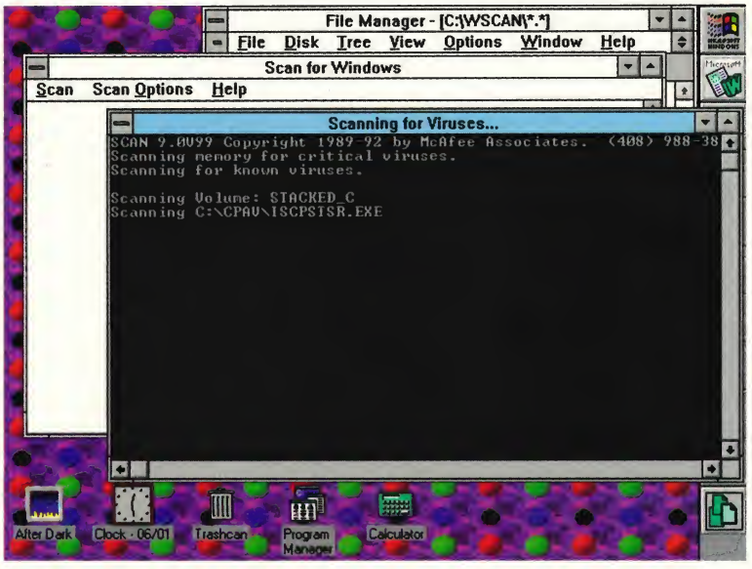
Central Point Anti-Virus 1.4

Central Point Software (081) 848 1414

£115

Again, it's the typical combination of scanner, integrity checker and TSR monitor that make up Central Point's Anti-Virus package.

But, it goes considerably further than most by offering a range of extra features. For example, Central Point Anti-Virus has a scheduling option, like Norton Anti-Virus, and it also offers a choice of two monitor pro-



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PC REVIEW AUGUST 93

grams; a larger, and safer TSR, or a smaller memory-resident option. A utility called BootSafe can be used to take a copy of the most important boot sector and hard disk information during installation and then always checks both at boot-up to make sure they haven't been changed. This is an excellent addition, although care needs to be taken if it's used in conjunction with either the Stacker or SuperStor disk compression packages.

Unfortunately, Central Point Anti-Virus is let down by a slow integrity checker, but it does give reasonable levels of accuracy — about 66 per cent when tested — in virus detection overall, and it found all of the common viruses, like Norton Anti-Virus.

Norton Antivirus 2.1 is good at detecting common viruses, but tends to be slow in operation.

However, the best thing about Central Point Anti-Virus is its usability. With the same front-end as PC Tools, using directory trees, file lists and pull-down menus, it's a package that is extremely easy to understand and use effectively, even if you're not terribly *au fait* with DOS.

McAfee Anti-virus Utilities

International Data Security
(071) 631 0548
£99

A long standing and very popular suite of anti-virus utilities, so long-standing, in fact, and so often updated (which is always a good thing with anti-virus software) that the current version is 9.0 version 99! McAfee Anti-virus Utilities are regularly available as shareware to be downloaded from bulletin boards everywhere.

In terms of capabilities and accuracy, this is a good all-round performer, comprising a scanner, TSR monitor and a disinfectant called CleanUp, which produces consistently good results in detecting a wide range of viruses.

However, the biggest drawback to the McAfee software is the reliance on the old command line interface. Although there is a Windows front-end, the programs have been designed to be run from the DOS prompt and this requires a good working knowledge of DOS if it's going to be worth attempting. Certainly not a patch on the Central Point software in the usability stakes.

Norton Antivirus 2.1

Symantec (0628) 592 222
£149

The most recent improvements to the Norton Antivirus software (NAV) have supposedly concentrated on speed and coverage of viruses. This doesn't exactly go a long way to explaining why it's still slow and why it still has a relatively low success rate in virus detection.

Testing with over 3,000 viruses, NAV managed to spot only 1,860 viruses, or roughly 60 per cent. This isn't a high enough percentage to feel very confident about its ability to protect data, with shareware alternatives like McAfee or F-Prot producing better results.

To be fair, those that it fails to detect are mostly lab viruses. NAV is very good on the common 'wild viruses' —those that you or I are most likely to encounter.

It's also easy to install and configure, the TSR can be loaded into upper memory to keep base memory free for more important things (like games) and, most usefully, it allows scheduled and background scanning. This means you can get on with something else while a lengthy virus scan takes place.

Buyers' guide to virus protection software

Name	Method	Supplier	Phone number	Price
All Safe	All types	X-Tree (Software Paradise)	(0222) 887521	£79
Anti-Virus Assist	All types	Technocom	(0753) 534900	£1,595
Anti-Virus Plus	All types	Menhorah Software	(081) 883 4269	£79
Anti-Virus Toolkit DOS	All types	S&S	(0442) 877877	£99
Anti-Virus Toolkit Windows	All types	S&S	(0442) 877877	£125
Central Point Anti-Virus	All types	Central Point	(081) 848 1414	£115
D-fENCE	Scanner	Sophos	(0235) 559933	£19.50
DataSave	All types	IDS	(071) 631 0548	£128
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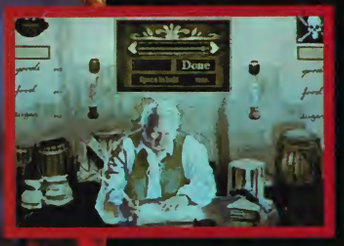

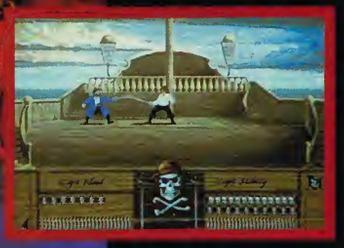

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reviews

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Specifications

PCs come in so many different flavours and configurations that finding out whether a PC-compatible game really is going to work with your set-up can be a minefield. Each review carries a detailed TechSpec column, explaining what features are supported by the game in an easy-to-read, at-a-glance panel.

The graphics, soundboards and control sections tell you which popular devices are supported by the game in question.

Under disk requirements, you'll find out whether a game needs to be installed on to hard disk in order to play it, and how much space it takes up if installed to hard disk. We also note if the game comes on high density disks.

The performance section isn't quite so clear cut. Publishers often state a set of minimum hardware requirements on the box, but these can be very minimal indeed. Our optimum performance level is a subjective rating, and gives you not the publisher's base specification required, but rather the minimum we think the game needs in order to run comfortably. Game X may run on a 286, but at a snail's pace, or it may run OK on a 16MHz 286 but be unacceptably slow at 8MHz. This is where we let you know.

After the optimum speed rating, we note the minmum RAM required to run the game, and finally, how much of your base 640K RAM must be available for the game to load properly.

Alternatively

We believe games should be placed in context. You may like the sound of game Y but suspect it might be too technical, or difficult to control. We'll tell you about alternative games of a similar style, subject matter, or interface, which might be more to your taste (or warn you off those which are inferior to the game being reviewed, however superficially similar).

Two Minutes

This is the closest you'll get to seeing the game in action. We take a series of manoeuvres from the game and explain clearly the gameplay required to get through the screens. You may find some helpful game hints in this section!

Rating system

We give a single mark out of 10 to indicate what we think of the quality of the game. As a rough guideline, the ratings break down thus:

0-2	Dreadful
3-4	Deficient
5	Average
6-7	Good
8-9	Excellent
10	Staggeringly perfect

Ratings are not the sole preserve of the author of the review, but are discussed and thrashed out by everyone at PC Review who knows the game in question.

We also practise 'contemporaneous marking' – which means that games are rated to other current games.

The reason for this is that, while PC programming expertise is improving all the time, and Monkey Island VI will doubtless be miles better than Monkey Island II, that doesn't mean it will have to get 16 out of 10 when reviewed. If it looks excellent compared to everything else around at the time, it'll still be worthy of its eight or nine.

Shareware

The shareware reviews section is an independently-written column on the best and most interesting of the latest shareware and public domain releases.

If it's help with specific games that you're looking for, turn to page 112 where our extensive tips section, QED, begins. And in Software Search, we'll help you find the software you need for just about any application.

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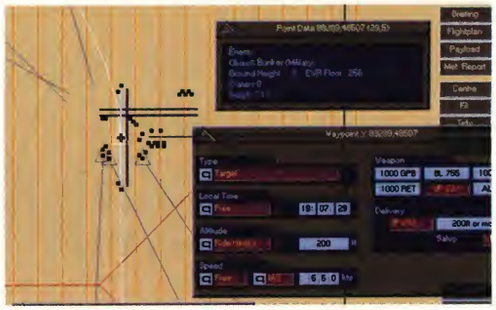
Contact	**(0276) 684959**
Price	**£44.99**

The war is hotting up and as I've got near air supremacy, it's time to take out a few airfields to keep the orange fighters grounded.



The mission planning screen shows the target airfield in close-up. I'm going to swoop across it at 200ft, 500 knots dropping JP233 along the length of the runway. Hopefully.

Tornado

It's been a long wait, but finally Digital Integration's Tornado barrel-rolls onto your computer screen with a vengeance

Although the Tornado doesn't have the enviably glamourous reputation of the F-15 or the F-18, it remains a remarkable aircraft. In the Gulf war, it had the task of destroying Iraqi airfields and its great strength lies in its ability to penetrate deep into enemy territory, flying as low and as fast as possible and delivering the dumbest of 'dumb' weapons with pin-point accuracy. Low-level flying is the heart of Tornado, where sometimes even flying at 200ft seems too high.

Tornado must surely be one of the best presented products to appear this year. The box contents are reminiscent of a MicroProse release with a weighty 333 page manual, control summary card and three full-colour warzone maps. When the game has installed, the mouse-driven control interface looks equally impressive, with digitised pictures of aircraft, air crews and other military equipment representing the available menu options.

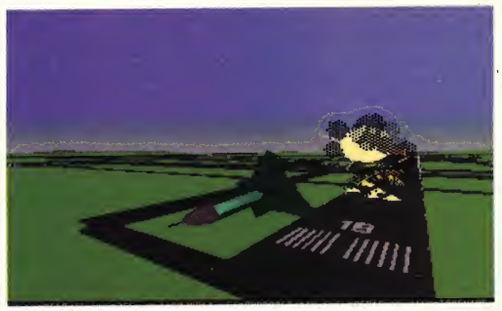
The game structure itself is divided into several distinct sections, increasing both in difficulty and complexity. After beginning with the simulator, the novice Flight Officer can either opt for the relative safety of the training ground or the full-blown dangers of mortal combat. The combat section (the main part of the game) is further divided into 54 stand-alone missions, a two player option, campaign play and the ultimate command option.

Your life as a pilot will probably begin in the simulator which consists of 20 pre-planned exercises ranging from landing and navigation practice to bombing runs

Two Minutes *of counter air suppression*

At the navigator's screen you can check on your progress. The left screen shows the flight plan, the right shows an infra-red image from the Tornado's nose-camera.

Approaching the target I encounter a SAM site and an AA battery. Firing ALARM, the anti-radar missile will lock on to the enemy radar emissions. I'm now three seconds late.



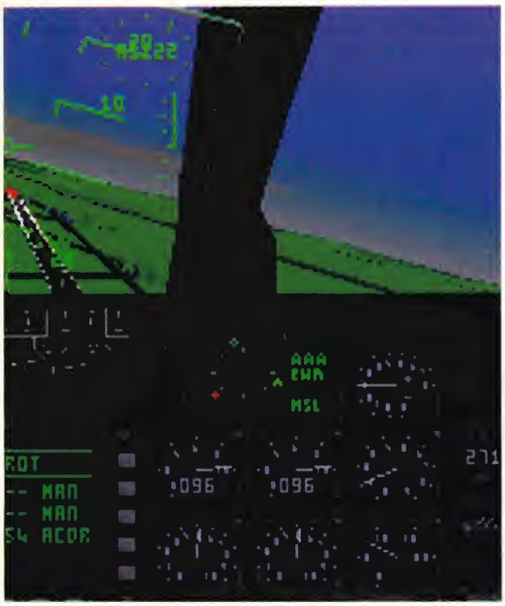
Success. Two Tornados sweep across the airfield from east to west while I drop JP233 on the runway, dodging missiles as I go. Runway 18 is officially out of commission.

and air patrols. Time spent here is far from wasted because sim hours allow you to learn safely and familiarise yourself with all aspects of Tornado flying, opting perhaps for unlimited weapons, unlimited fuel and the ever-useful ability to bounce off the ground. It's a good and totally indestructible path to learning both the basics of low-level supersonic flight and the limitations of the aircraft.

In making Tornado as realistic as possible there has been no cutting corners and tailoring of the flight model to make the aircraft easier to fly. Realism is the watchword here and the only way you can avoid it is to stay firmly in the simulator mode. But then what self-respecting flyer is going to want to do that?

So what's new?

Tornado lets you fly two versions of the Panavia Tornado, notably the GR4 Interdictor/Strike (IDS) and the F3 Air Defence Variant (ADV) aircraft. At low-level, the IDS is the fastest aircraft in the world and so, unsurprisingly, low-level strike missions make up a large proportion of the game. These missions can range from simple bridge bombing to JP233 runway attacks and surgical Laser Guided Bomb (LGB) runs which use the video-aiming technology you will doubtless have seen during the Gulf war.



The Tornado's superb performance at low-level can be attributed to an extremely smart autopilot which is easily more than capable of flying a mission by itself. In addition to the standard autopilot controlling altitude and heading, the Tornado boasts an auto-throttle that maintains a constant airspeed not to mention a sophisticated terrain following system, which pitches the aircraft up and down to hold a constant ride height (ie, 200ft) above the ground.

The advantages of following terrain are that low-flying aircraft are harder to detect and track successfully. This effectively allows a Tornado to approach a target practically unnoticed, mount a swift surprise attack and then escape. But although the TF system is smart, it does have its limitations. The faster you fly, the more difficult it becomes to follow the ground closely, so it's best to remember that it still can't be guaranteed not to fly you into a steep hillside at 600 knots.

Selecting track mode commands the aircraft to follow the predefined flight plan. The aircraft automatically flies from one waypoint to the next, adjusting altitude and speed where necessary. In approach mode, the autopilot can be linked to the Instrument Landing System of an allied airfield for an automated approach, where it adjusts speed, height and heading.

I've always found that landing in most simulations has been a problem. There is really nothing worse than flying a successful F-15 mission, hitting all your briefed targets and then crashing into the back-end of the aircraft carrier trying to land. Thankfully, Tornado uses this sophisticated ILS approach to take you to within 200ft of the ground. All you then have to do is drop the gear, lower the flaps and throttle back. Simple, easy and there's no crashing into anything.

The mission planner is at the heart of a successful campaign. Here suspected Anti-Aircraft fire zones are marked with orange shading my flightplan with white lines.

Features of the planner include weather reports, waypoint statistics and target information. The transparent windows can be moved around if they obscure your view of the map.

As Tornado's number one concern is realism, the simulator cockpit closely resembles its real counterpart.

As the Tornado is a two-seater, you control both pilot and navigator positions. The navigator screen is occupied by an instrument panel which contains large TV displays which can be cycled to show the views from either a forward looking camera, a scrollable map, the TIALD laser designation bombing system and the flightplan display. The weapons stores are also managed from this screen, which displays the available weapons packages (including JP233 runway bombs, retarded bombs, ALARM anti-radar missiles, etc) and their particular delivery modes.

If the prospect of all this new technology sounds rather daunting, you need have no fear. Although Tornado is undoubtedly a complex game, it aims to cater for both novice and experienced flyer alike.

For the terminally impatient, consequently there is a no-nonsense quickstart option, which gets you up and into the air, shooting, rolling, pitching, bombing and crashing within moments of startup.

The training mode builds on your knowledge gained from the simulator, offering a selection of real-time, real-world exercises, while combat throws you right into the thick of the action — three warzones with live AA tracer fire, SAM activity and enemy aircraft in abundance.

Mission designing

What really sets Tornado most apart from your run of the mill fly and fight sim is the mission planning screen. This powerful utility enables you to review, change or plan a single mission or even a whole squadron's flight plans down to the smallest detail as you see fit. The planner can be accessed after the initial mission screens and is usually most utilised in the campaign and command options where you are allowed to designate your own targets and plan your own strikes for both your IDS and ADV Tornados.

The planner offers a wealth of information and features including: a map key (where you can highlight airfields, suspected zones of AA coverage, areas covered by AWACS aircraft, fighter CAP routes, ground force concentrations, etc); intelligence data on any specific part of the map; weather reports; flight plan editing and payload editing. When you are planning a mission, the map can be magnified up to as much as six times, allowing you to zoom right down to highlight individual buildings and bridges.

Creating a flight plan is a simple matter of clicking on the map exactly where you want your waypoints to be located, choosing how high you want the aircraft to fly, at what speed and whether the waypoint is a turning point, an airfield approach point or a target. All of this vital information appears in individual windows which can be moved around (just like Windows 3.1, for example) if they're obscuring your view of the map.

The mission planner really comes into its own in the campaign and command options. With the campaign option, you can choose to fight one of 15 campaigns over three war zones. The main difference here from the mission section is that although the missions are linked, the computer no longer plans your missions, you have to do it yourself.

You are given a task, say blowing up a power station, and using the mission planner you have to plan how to approach your target, avoiding AA fire and aircraft, then blow it sky high and return without getting your tail shot off. Also, if you're flying with other aircraft, your mission must be timed down to the second. For

Tornado (right) has some impressive external views including tracking, satellite, spectator/remote and drone views.

The RAF, DI and Tornado

Tornado could not have been designed realistically without the help from BAe and especially the RAF. During visits made to RAF Honnington to take video footage for the digitised stills, the fact that DI was simulating the Tornado prompted interest from RAF aircrews. As the development progressed, the aircrew followed its progress and subsequently attracted the attention of other members of the air force.

When the betas were running the RAF itself expressed an interest in the program and it is now apparently under consideration to be bought for the RAF's ground-based training applications. This keener interest led to DI being invited to an RAF careers show at Blenheim, with Tornado on show as an interactive "crowd puller". With six more of these shows to attend this year, the prospects for Tornado look good. Hopes are high that the RAF will want to use Tornado as an aircraft familiarization tool before future pilots progress on to the purpose built military simulators.

Alternatively...

AV8B Harrier Assault
Domark, £39.99
Rated 9, Issue 15
After the disappointment of the Mig-29 duo, Domark has combined the technical skills of Simis with improved graphics and gameplay to come up with a top-notch package based around the British developed VSTOL aircraft. Set against the backdrop of a fictional Indonesian war, AV8B Harrier Assault offers a perfect combination of strategy, flight model and intense combat.

Falcon 3.0
Spectrum Holobyte, £49.99
Rated 9, Issue 9
This hyper-realistic F-16 sim comes very highly recommended indeed. Although you are just a pilot here, you do have access to an impressive wealth of useful options such as wingmen, ongoing campaigns and even tutorial flights. Although the graphic quality of the game itself is a touch arguable, there is no doubt that it is one of the most playable flight sims around at the moment.

example, in a four aircraft bombing run over an enemy runway, all of the Tornados arrive from different angles to confuse the ground defences. If you time your own pass so you are just a second or two late, you can see your fellow pilots swoop across the airfield in front of you dropping their bombs. These timed bombing runs are the key to the total destruction of a target.

As the campaign option was one step up from the stand-alone missions, so the command option is one step up from campaign. After viewing the war situation and the strength of your forces (blue) and the enemy forces (orange), you now have overall control, able to designate your own targets and having up to six Tornados flying at once. Either send four aircraft to attack a target with two more flying air cover, or despatch them off in twos or on their own to attack multiple targets. Here you run the war your way and if you muck up it's your fault alone. Things can get so involved that sometimes I spent hours planning a mission even though I might only then be in the sky for 16 minutes in total.

After all this, the two player option is fairly self-explanatory. It's a feature that seems to be appearing more and more frequently in the new breed of flight simulators, offering you the option of flying head-to-head against a friend using either a modem or direct serial link. The aim is simply to shoot your opponent down.

Containing in total more than 80 pre-planned missions in three war zones, Tornado claims to have a 'target rich environment', containing over 4,000 possible targets per map. Despite the advances in shading and rendering, DI has developed a sophisticated 3D modelling system, sacrificing Gouraud for speed and variety. In this way, the programmers have been able to create some instantly recognisable ground objects, though I have to admit that it's a little hard to appreciate the modelling of a Challenger tank when you overfly it at 200ft and 600 knots.

Is it a great game?

Tornado is more than just a game – it is simulation at its best. In many ways, it reminds me of MicroProse's F19 Stealth Bomber in that it's advisable to stay utterly undetected for as long as possible, drop your bombs, and then run away to the hills as fast as you possibly can.

There is the temptation to say that too much is controlled by the autopilot, but you can get out of Tornado what you want. If you're happy sitting back and letting the autopilot do the work for you then that's fine, but if you're flying solo you can take time out from your flight plan to take out a few SAM sites, bomb the odd bridge and even strafe a few vehicles.

Tornado is nothing short of comprehensive. It's probably not a natural progression for the veteran F-15 fighter jockey who may be disappointed that there aren't planes to shoot every couple of seconds. But if you want an accurate portrayal of what it's like to fly a Tornado and the sort of tactics you'll need to stay alive, then this is a superb product.

On the other hand, if you just want to fly and loop and shoot things with not so much as a passing nod to reality then you'd be better off with something else.

My criticisms of Tornado are few and minor ones at that. The explosions are weak and it would have been nice to see planes not just blow up but spiral down out of the sky when hit. It would also have been nice to plan missions for the other aircraft in the game such as the Apache Gunships and the A-10s. But I suppose you can't have everything.

Tornado may not be your cup of tea, but this is real Tornado flying. Stay low, fly fast and keep out of trouble. Besides, this is how the RAF do it and you can't really argue with reality.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec

Tornado needs about 600K of free ram so the mouse driver must be loaded into the high memory area. A mouse is essential and although minimum spec is a 16MHz 386, you'd be better off with something a lot faster.

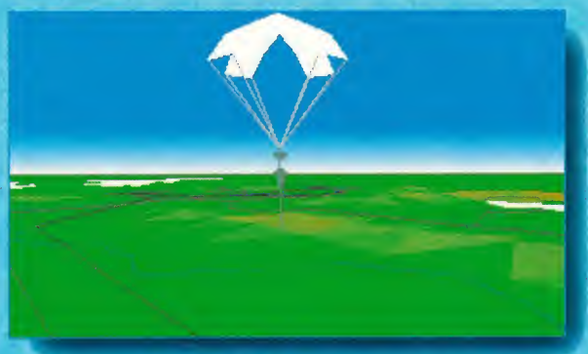
Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	11Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	40MHz 386				
Minimum memory	1Mb				
Free RAM required	600K				

Verdict
A superb simulation with enormous attention to detail

rating **9**

Laser Guided Bombs were used in the Gulf for surgical strikes through windows and down chimneys. Here on the left-hand screen I've targeted a helicopter on full zoom from 23,000ft above the airfield.

With the helicopter successfully targeted, the bomb can be released to fall quite happily on to the target.



The anti-radar missile waits in the sky for active radar emissions, then drops on the target like a guided bomb.

A JP233 dispenser drops clusters of small sub-munitions to damage runways and thereby ground jets.

Title	**Betrayal at Krondor**
Publisher	**Sierra**
Contact	**(0734) 303322**
Price	**£44.99**

There are many quests and sub-quests to be performed during the game, but the first involves escorting an ambiguous character called Gorath to the southern settlement at Krondor.

The game has hardly begun and you've already made a couple of interesting discoveries. This waymarker points the way to the multicultural town of LaMut, where you can stock up on weapons, visit the garrison or spend time in the tavern.

Is it a game? Is it a novel? Is it more compelling than both, or a mish-mash of irreconcilable media? These are just some of the questions posed by Dynamix's first-person 3D role-playing game

Betrayal at Krondor

Betrayal at Krondor is based on the Midkemian Universe created by Raymond E Feist. This means that if you're not a fan of Feist's writing (and I have to admit to finding his style irritating) your experiences in the game aren't going to be exclusively positive. This is because Krondor attempts to combine the novel and the computer game in a unique way.

It works like this. 'Plot', in a computer game, usually refers to an experience which you create for yourself. You are free to wander around and create your own adventures, maybe discovering the background story by reading the manual, talking to the other characters you meet, examining a few scrolls, watching a few animated sequences, and so on.

Krondor behaves in much the same way, but binds the gameplay much more closely to a novel structure. So, for example, the action is divided into nine 'chapters', each with a specific, short-term goal, and an epilogue. These chapters are preceded by a couple of pages of text (unmistakably Feistian in style) and an animated narrative. Encounters with other (non-combat) characters in the game are often more passive than active, because you simply watch what is being said and only occasionally make enquiries. Then there are crucial points at which you have to make decisions, in the style of the interactive novel. Hours of consultation with Feist himself have ensured that the characters in the game are consistent with the characters you find in his Riftwar novels.

The old, old story

So much for the game structure. I won't give away too many details about the story itself, since there's an entire section in the manual devoted to a summary of the original novel, Riftwar Saga, there are reams and reams of text during the game giving a background to each mission, and there are plenty of animated sequences, sub-missions and meetings with non-player characters which create a credible game universe. Revealing details here would no doubt spoil the surprises which are an integral part of the fun.

However, if you have already sneakily looked at some of the screen shots in the review, you will easily guess what kind of a story Krondor tells. This is traditional role-playing fare, with stock characters such as noble heroes and young scamps, mercenaries, pirates, sorcerers, spirits, giants, trolls and royalty. It all takes place against a backdrop of hazardous pathways, lofty peaks, gloomy mines, towns and temples, shops and inns.

So what makes Krondor worth bothering with? The answer lies in the depth of the characters involved. Most RPGs give you characters which consist of a portrait and a list of vital statistics; Krondor gives you both of these, plus masses of text which bring your party to life. You grow more closely attached to your group when you hear how they speak, read about their actions in detail and watch them in digitised animated sequences.

Better still, the three characters you begin with — Locklear, Owyn Beleforte and Gorath — aren't the only three you meet. There are a dozen others in the story, all portrayed in the same fine detail, and encompassing a mixture of races and classes. If Krondor has nothing else to offer the role-playing genre, its depth of characterisation is impressive and unique.

The downside of this is that the text passages themselves are, on the whole, uninspired — a kind of dour, clichéd fan-

Two Minutes *of chapter one*

Having refreshed your party you travel south on the road to Krondor. There are several routes you can take with plenty of small villages offering useful services, but there are also many hired assassins lurking in the shadows.

Luckily there was only one mercenary and he was no match for your warriors. Now isn't the time for squeamishness, either: the corpse yields several items useful to your quest. A click-and-drag system transfers objects to your characters.

Eventually, after a long walk in which you encountered no further trouble, your party stumbles on this village late in the evening. Most locations have an inn, many have a shop and some offer opportunities of a more individual nature.

tasy writing which I find irksome. It makes me cringe when I hear characters exclaiming "Damnation!" and read phrases like "The goddess of death will treat you with more mercy." If, on the other hand, this style doesn't immediately annoy you, you're in for a good, long read.

Controlling your party is easy, thanks to a point-and-click interface. Left and right mouse-clicks are used for activating and examining things, icons perform special functions, a compass-pointer is used to guide you around the game world (though I prefer Ultima Underworld's intuitive on-screen pointer), and an automatic path-follower helps you stick to the recognised roads. The action is displayed in polygon-based 3D, with characters displayed as sprites. To cope with different machine speeds, a preferences screen customises step size, object detail, turn size and 3D graphical detail. For the maximum effects you'll need at least a 486DX.

All characters have a comprehensive inventory, divided up into equipment (armour, weaponry, magic weapons) and other items. These items can include spare weaponry, potions, keys, rations, bags and a host of special objects, such as the Glory Hand which allows its wielder to steal any item from combat opponents, or Weed walkers which greatly increase stealth.

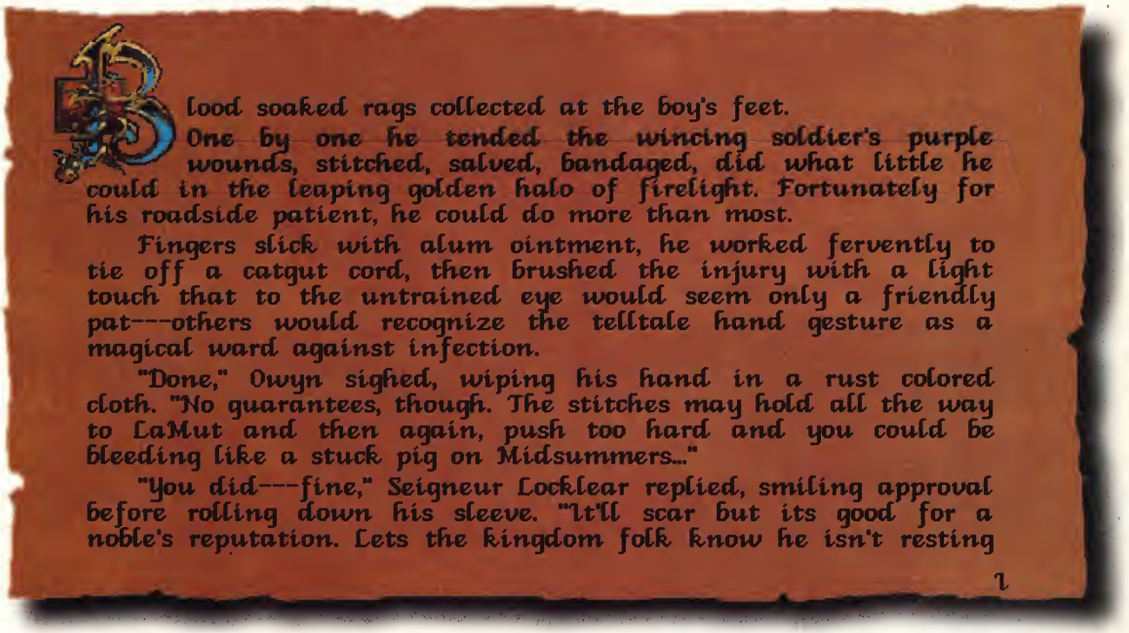
The inventory can also be utilised to activate one object on another. For example, if you have a whetstone you can use it to sharpen a sword, and if there are locks to be picked a screen appears allowing you to try each of the keys you are carrying individually. You have to be careful, though — an unskilled lock-picker can easily break a key.

As well as an inventory, each of your characters has his/her own ratings and skills screen. It's a well structured system, with a clear, concise information display. The ratings are health, stamina, strength and speed, and each is displayed as a current and potential value. Changes only occur as gradual improvements over time (in combat, for example), although there are items and potions available to give you a temporary boost.

A character can have an encouraging variety of skills, but isn't usually adept at all of them. Skills can include defence, crossbow accuracy, melee and spell-casting accuracy, combat assessment, weaponcraft (when using the whetstone), armourcraft, barding, haggling, lock-picking, scouting (the ability to detect ambushes) and, last but not least, stealth. It's a fairly comprehensive list to which you should pay close attention. It's no good handing a bunch of lock-picks to someone with butterfingers, is it?

As is typical of the game throughout, all of the ratings, skills and inventory items are thoroughly explained in the manual, with good examples of how everything works.

Left and below: Krondor is divided up into nine 'chapters' (and an epilogue), each with an introduction. These introductions feature a couple of pages of text detailing the background to the current task, followed by a dramatic, digitised action sequence. At the end of it all, you find yourself at the start of the mission.



Blood soaked rags collected at the boy's feet. One by one he tended the wincing soldier's purple wounds, stitched, salved, bandaged, did what little he could in the leaping golden halo of firelight. Fortunately for his roadside patient, he could do more than most.

Fingers slick with alum ointment, he worked fervently to tie off a catgut cord, then brushed the injury with a light touch that to the untrained eye would seem only a friendly pat---others would recognize the telltale hand gesture as a magical ward against infection.

"Done," Owyn sighed, wiping his hand in a rust colored cloth. "No guarantees, though. The stitches may hold all the way to LaMut and then again, push too hard and you could be bleeding like a stuck pig on Midsummers..."

"You did---fine," Seigneur Locklear replied, smiling approval before rolling down his sleeve. "It'll scar but its good for a noble's reputation. Lets the kingdom folk know he isn't resting

1

Wandering around

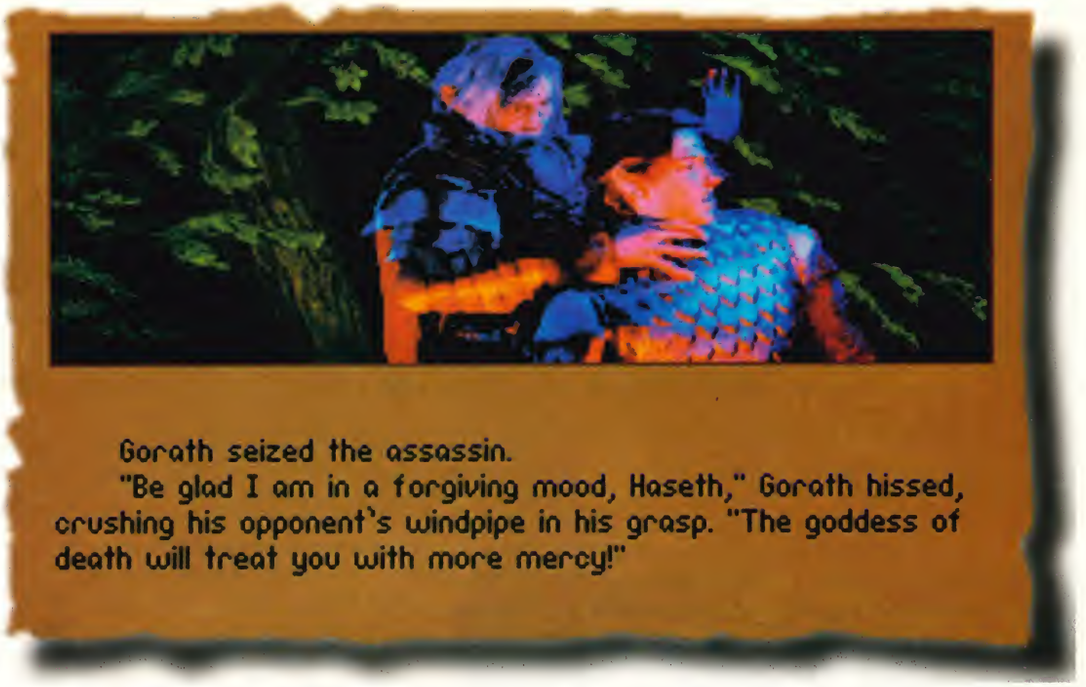
It only takes a moment to master the movement controls, so you soon find yourself wondering where to go and what to avoid. Most of your wandering will take place on the travel screen. This provides a helpful 3D view of the location, pictures of your characters, and action icons allowing you to consult the map, encamp, save your current position, go to the options screen, cast spells and follow the road which you are standing on.

This last option is particularly useful because it makes travelling that much easier. You also have the facility to deactivate it, allowing your party to sneak past an ambush. The encamp option gives your characters time to recuperate. The only drawbacks with this are that if a party member is already starving their condition will deteriorate, and because you automatically break camp when your team is healed, you can find yourself waking up in the middle of the night.

One of the game's strengths is its graphical variety from chapter to chapter. The first mission is a fairly simple expedition along the coast to Krondor, but after that you will encounter a variety of underground and surface locations, including the palace and the labyrinthine sewers in Krondor, the vaults at Sarth, and the Lifestone Crater. Adding considerable atmosphere to this visual variety are a number of impressive special effects. Day and night are convincingly done, as is the eerie light from a torch; weather effects vary from storms to bright sunshine.

Each location type has its own unique hazards, such as puzzle traps (which can be fatal), bandits and other enemies. Midkemia has a particularly nasty collection of foes, none of whom give up easily. Mercenaries, assassins, spirits, giants, trolls, Brak-Nurr (stone-like creatures who live in caves and mines), pirates and evil sorcerers are just a few of the many you'll encounter. Unless you're well equipped and pay attention to the combat advice in the manual, you won't get very far.

Combat itself takes place on a 3D battleground, and is one of the weakest elements of the game. It works on a 'turn' basis rather than the real-time, hack-and-slash action used successfully in the Ultima Underworld duo, the Eye of the Beholder series, and Dungeon Master. As a result, there is little tension during a fight, and you can often guess well in advance how a contest will turn out.



Below: Midkemia has a wide variety of shops offering an initially bewildering array of goods. Many shopkeepers are willing to haggle, so even if you're short of cash you could still buy that clerical oilcloth.

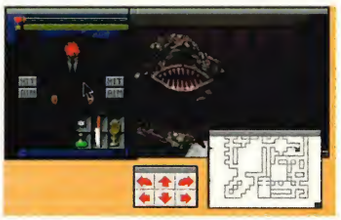
You have several tactical options during combat, all controlled by icons and dependent on your position on the battlefield. You can thrust or swing with a sword or staff, move closer to the enemy, fire a crossbow, assume a defensive posture, size up your opponents, flee (not always possible), rest, wield magic or go into auto-combat mode. This last option hands over control to the computer, allowing you to sit back and watch the scrap. It's not always the most useful alternative.

How successful you are depends on three things: the characters' ratings relative to their opponents, the objects in their possession, and your ability to keep moving around the battlefield. The ratings are self-evident: the healthier and more skilled you are, the better chance you have of survival. Objects can increase damage caused by your weapons — so, if you have naphtha in your inventory you can combine it with your sword to create

Alternatively...

Ultima Underworld 2: Labyrinth of Worlds
Origin, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 18
The sequel to one of the biggest role-playing games of 1992 doesn't disappoint. The atmosphere is superb, with an impressive level of character interaction, a do-it-yourself plot, and improved 3D graphics. The action leads you through a huge game landscape consisting of eight separate dimensions, including ice levels, haunted castles, enchanted forests and alien worlds. All this and an intuitive mouse interface and auto-mapper.

Legends of Valour
US Gold, £39.99
Rated 8, Issue 15
US Gold occasionally gives role-players something pretty remarkable, and Legends of Valour marked a steady improvement even on the original Ultima Underworld, with better technology, a bigger game world than any other RPG and a sense of humour. Unusually, there's very little plot overall. You are left virtually free to explore the game environment, solve various mysteries, engage in fights and amass cash. Refreshing, but always not to everyone's taste.



The Legacy
MicroProse, £44.99
Rated 8, Issue 19
If you are after something a little more off-beat than Krondor, this block-scrolling, first-person RPG should fit the bill perfectly. It forsakes the typical sword-and-sorcery plot in favour of a haunted mansion scenario, with rescalable windows to boot. The game elements are standard fare — monsters, puzzles, inventories, magic and so on — but the atmosphere generated by the superbly animated graphics and subtly understated sound effects is extremely impressive.

Feisty Writing

Dynamix's intention in Betrayal at Krondor was to create a game that felt like one of Raymond E Feist's books. More specifically, it has tried to recreate the atmosphere of his Riftwar Saga (Magician, Silverthorn, A Darkness at Sethanon and Prince of the Blood). Feist's other books include Faerie Tale, and three 'Empire' novels (in collaboration with Janny Wurts).

The author himself was born in LA in 1945, and has experience of a number of jobs including photographer, car salesman and game designer. He now writes full time, and collects classic films, art and vintage wines. Here endeth the trivia.

a fiery blade. Lastly, if you keep moving your opponent has to approach you before attacking, which means he can only thrust, rather than taking a meaty swing.

If your mage is powerful enough, magic can also be used to good effect in combat. The range of spells isn't huge and is mostly unimaginative (balls of flame, defence barriers, freeze opponent, light-in-darkness, healing, and so on), but there are a few which are unique to the game. These include drawing an enemy close for hand-to-hand combat, lightning bolt (on foes wearing metal), summoning a spirit to your assistance, and temporary blindness.

If all else fails, and your party is close to death, you can always visit a temple and pray for a cure. Temples, incidentally, also act as teleport points.

The road to success isn't unfailingly hazardous, however. There are plenty of goodies to be found, whether it's a field of ripe corn, supplies taken from defeated foes, stray chests full of treasure, or places to replenish your strength and buy goods. It's a good idea to explore all the side roads and tunnels you encounter, since you just might find that little extra help you've been looking for.

Towns and other settlements are the most useful of all locations, since they contain inns (where you can buy food and drink and listen to the local gossip), shops (buy and sell items) and a number of other special places, where (for example) people will train you in the art of swordsmanship, tell you about a sub-quest, guide you to a library of useful information, or simply give you water.

Wherever you wander, it's vital to talk to everyone you meet. There will always be something you've missed, and an idle piece of gossip can lead you on to a whole new series of adventures, which bring rewards of their own.

Size isn't everything

Betrayal at Krondor is a huge game. There are 224 million square feet of land to explore, compared to Ultima VII's estimated 5.29 million and the original Eye of the Beholder's small forest and single dungeon. However, the size of your game world doesn't necessarily guarantee a great role-playing game.

The main problem is the attempt to create a novel-cum-game. By binding the action so closely to a novel-style chapter structure, Krondor has a problem with linear plots. In the Ultima Underworld series you wander where you like and get through a lot of exploration before there's any real trouble; but here there's an obligation to complete the chapter, or sub-mission, or to gain extra gold or weaponry before you take on certain enemies. You're relatively free to wander at will, but it's often a futile or fatal exercise.

There are two map views — a standard representational view on which your party's position is clearly marked, and this unique 'overhead 3D mode' which can also be used for travel.

There are plenty of features to recommend it to fans of the genre. The 3D technology is impressive, there are plenty of special effects (for example, runes on chests are deciphered right before your eyes), the depth of characterisation is unique, and the variety in graphics and mission types can be compelling. The trouble is, the game isn't consistently good: the clichéd writing, repetitive text passages, linear plot, weak combat system and occasionally frustrating dead ends make enjoyment difficult.

More seriously, I encountered a few crashes while playing the game, which raises questions about its stability.

Betrayal at Krondor is a unique attempt to unify two forms of entertainment, but because of its repetitiveness, an annoyingly quaint writing style and the other faults mentioned above, it wasn't one that greatly interested me.

■ Gordon Houghton

Puzzles aren't always of the 'hit the switch to open the door' variety. These unusual 3D puzzles can cause the extermination of your characters if you put a foot wrong.

TechSpec *Krondor's technology is almost ahead of its time. Dynamix's minimum recommended machine is a 386 running at 20MHz, but you don't get the powerful visual effects. 486DX at 50MHz is better.*

Disk requirements					
	High density	✓			
	Hard disk only	✓			
	Space taken on hard disk	*15Mb*			
Graphic modes					
	CGA	x	*EGA*	x	*Tandy* x
	VGA	✓	*SVGA*	x	
Soundboards					
	Ad Lib	✓	*Roland*	✓	*Sound Blaster* ✓
Control					
	Joystick	x	*Keyboard*	✓	*Mouse* ✓
Performance					
	Optimum speed	*33MHz*			
	Minimum memory	*640K*			
	Free RAM required	*580K*			

rating **5**

Verdict
An ambitious, but ultimately dull, attempt to combine two forms of entertainment

Title	**Sensible Soccer**
Publisher	**Renegade**
Contact	**(071) 481 9214**
Price	**£34.99**

Second round, second leg of the European Cup Winner's Cup and everything, as they say, to play for. Especially when you're already down 2-1 on aggregate.

Things aren't going so well for AC Milan. Looks like now's the right time for a change of formation. While we're at it, I might just substitute the donkeys that have been pretending to be my midfield.

Sensible

Sensible Soccer can teach Taylor, Barnes and company everything they need to know about skill, flair and goal scoring

My first reaction to Sensible Soccer was 'Oh God, it's Lemmings with balls.' The players are the same size as the rodent menaces, and just as brim-full of character. Fortunately, lemmings don't wear studs, but Sensible Soccer still has the same addictive quality.

Sensi, as we've come to know it, has been around on other formats for a while, but has only just made it to the PC. The conversion has been done by AVM, and not without the odd hold-up. One thing that has to be said is that the demo disk we ran in the May issue played far faster, almost twice as fast in fact, as the finished game. The full version is infinitely more playable than the demo.

Like practically every football game, you control and tackle with the player nearest the ball. Just running with the ball takes some mastering, as it's always likely to run away from the player's feet. Then, you can either make a short 'intelligent' pass (ie, if there's a player roughly where you're facing, the ball goes to his feet) or by holding the button a fraction longer make a shot or longer pass.

But, it's the aftertouch system that makes all the difference. Pulling the joystick in a particular direction *after* kicking the ball will cause the shot to bend or loft according to how much and how quickly you yank the joystick about.

In most of the available PC football games, the moves and skills are fixed. The beauty of Sensi's aftertouch system is that it brings *feel* to every single move. Yes, there are set positions that are more likely to produce a goal, but the aftertouch allows for that spark of genius, that moment of surprise.

Heading the ball is an example, requiring excellent control to get the weight right on a cross and the right man diving into the box to nod it past the keeper.

Surprisingly, the keepers are always computer controlled, and as well as pulling off some fingertip saves, they also have a habit of letting in the odd goal.

When it comes to tackling, no quarter is given. The players slide and clatter viciously into each other, and if the timing's wrong (honest, ref, it was an accident ...) then one player ends up picking grass out of his teeth. And there's also plenty of off-the-ball misbehaviour. But satisfying though it is to hack someone down before they can get a shot in, the ref's not afraid to wave the the red card. On the whole, the rules are well observed.

You can always sub a player or change formations, and there is a wide variety of game options, including the World Cup Qualifiers (first round only) and various European Cup competitions.

Ordinary leagues can be set up, or friendlies and cup competitions, with away goals, replays, extra time, penalty shoot-outs, and different pitches and weather conditions. You can edit the teams, changing and adding players, teams and strips. So if you think you can do better than Graham Taylor here's your chance. I'd like to see a full international team set, including the South Americans, but I'll have to make do with the daft custom teams, like the Wobble Bottoms, with Cyril Smith in goal and Bernard Manning in midfield.

Two's company

Sensi can be played using the keyboard, but it's an option I'd avoid like the plague, since it makes the aftertouch difficult as hell. The obvious answer is a joystick, preferably a cheap *digital* one, not an expensive analogue flight sim-type contraption. Sensi against the computer is good, but Sensi against a living, breathing, swearing opponent is what it's all about. The problem is the PC hasn't

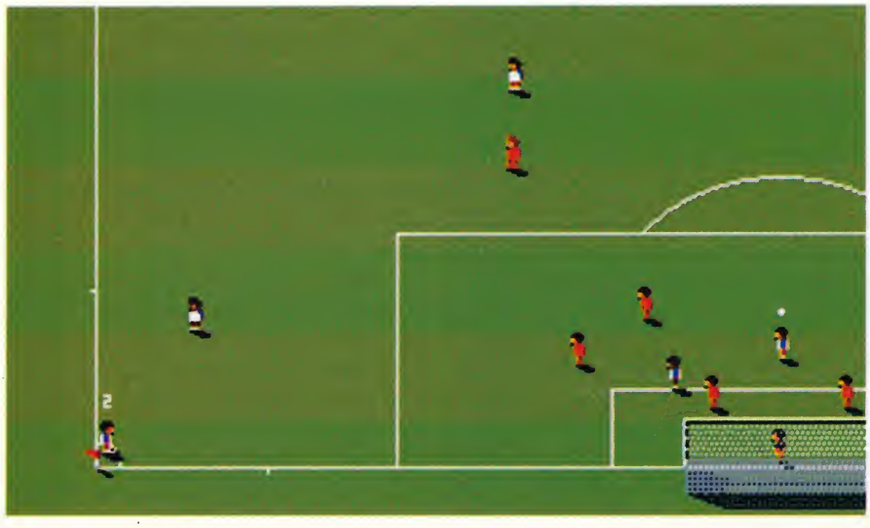
The team selection couldn't be more straightforward. You can also look at the opposition line up before making a decision about who to play.

After the kind of defensive ineptitude that would make the England team proud, I think this is one of those situations where a 'professional' foul is called for. Going, going ...

... got 'im. One for the Vincent Jones collection, that one. "Oh, come on ref, that was a dive!" Protesting his innocence won't wash though, the ref's bound to award a penalty.

The second-round match is over, AC Milan failed to produce the goods after extra time, and the results of the other cup-ties are only just starting to come in. Back to the training ground for me.

Soccer



Paris St Germain have brought up their left back for the corner kick. With a bit of deft aftertouch, I should be able to float the ball in to the man on the near post to flick it on.

Techspec *Needs 620K of base memory, which takes a lot of freeing up. The documentation could also be better, and for the full crowd effects, you need a Sound Blaster or compatible.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	800k				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✓	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	16MHz				
Minimum memory	640k				
Free RAM required	620K				

Verdict Miles ahead of the rest in terms of playability

rating **9**

come to terms with the idea of two joysticks yet, and although there are a few sound cards with two joystick ports, most only have one. The best solution is a twin joystick card (about £9).

Even so, the cost of Sensi in all its two player, 'in yer face' glory is beginning to mount up; at least £30 on top of the game price if you don't have the gear already.

As for glitches, there's the odd bug in the team data (easily rectified), and if you escape from a game during a tournament you lose 5-0, even if you were one goal up. Funny that ... But, my biggest grumble is actually about the sound. The roar of 'Erik the Viking', or the 'oohs' and 'ahs' as a shot rebounds are vital to the atmosphere and need the Sound Blaster SFX option selected. Unfortunately, I couldn't get any life whatsoever out of two Sound Blaster compatible cards, although the genuine article performed flawlessly.

They think it's all over ... it is now.

There will always be arguments over what makes the best football game. For me, this is the finest, most playable PC football game, and I can't see anything for at least the next year and a half which will kick it off my hard disk.

If I was dumped on a desert island with a PC and the choice of one game, Sensible Soccer would be it, no question. I'd prefer to have someone to play against, but wouldn't we all?

■ John Bennett

Alternatively...

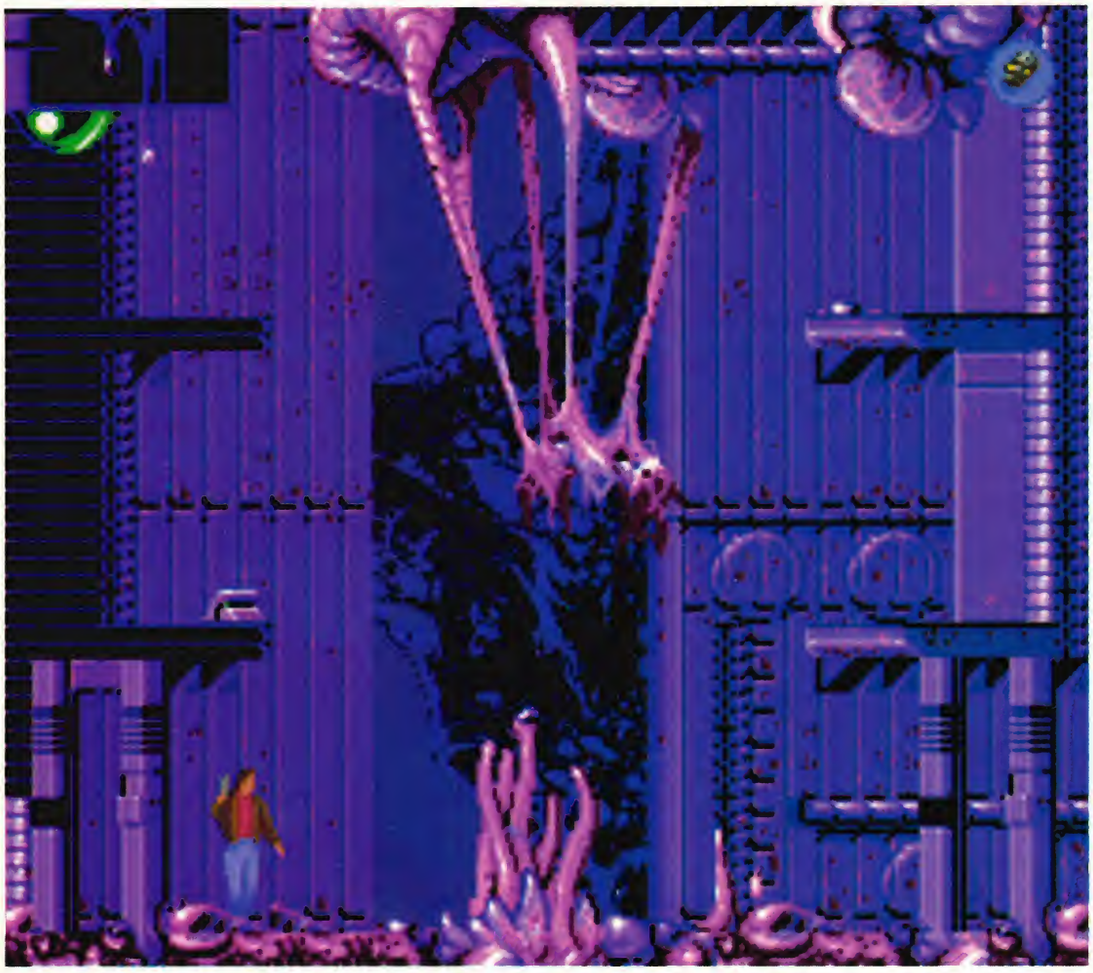
Kick Off 2
Empire (Soccer Stars compilation), £29.99
A great success on other formats, but the PC conversion is a disaster. Team selection and management are first class, but poor control, bugs and graphical glitches, ruin the play.

European Champ. '92
Empire (Sports Masters compilation), £34.99
Rated 7, Issue 10
Long in the tooth, but still capable of a decent performance. Lots of fun, particularly for two players, but skills are easily mastered and the gameplay is too basic.

Title	**Flashback**
Publisher	**US Gold/Delphine**
Contact	**(021) 625 3366**
Price	**£39.99**

Let's start at the beginning. We all have our off days, but coming round face down in the jungles of Titan is going to take more explaining than most. Time to find someone to talk to. Or shoot.

You know how it is when you wake up face down in a jungle – it must have been one hell of a night before. I guess that Conrad doesn't happen to be a morning kind of person.



Once I'd indulged myself with a quick 10 minutes of running around the opening screens shooting anything that even looked like it was capable of movement, Flashback brought me back down to earth rather sharpish. The follow-up to Another World, Flashback falls into the unusual category of 'thinking person's' platform games, with a recognisable storyline, problems to solve, dialogues and animated interludes, as well as all the usual running, jumping and fighting stuff.

The year is 2142AD, and Conrad Hart has invented a machine capable of analysing the molecular structure of any living creature. Lo and behold, he discovers that certain top ranking humans are, in fact, aliens in disguise. The aliens kidnap Conrad, but he escapes minus his memories and wakes up in a jungle with only a holocube for company. No prizes for guessing, then, that Conrad must recover his memories and foil the alien plan to destroy the Earth.

It may not be the most inspirational or original of plots, but I was hooked by Flashback from the moment Conrad picks himself up from the ground, because the animation of the central character is, quite simply, stunning.

Flashback

Flashback is a rare mix: a platform game with graphic adventure feel that also sets new standards in character animation

Two Minutes *of jungle fever*

What seemed like a good idea at the time is now turning into a very ill-timed leap, because he's about to land in that robot's lap. Things could get better though, he could miss the ledge completely.

They don't come much dumber than this chap. Take one stone. Lob it. Watch the guard go to investigate, then shoot him in the back. All's fair in love and platform games ...

Conrad goes up and over with consumate ease — the lad's just a natural climber, I guess. Once he's got that out of his system, he can use the recharger to bring his shield back to full power.

It's been done by Rotoscoping - filming an actor going through his paces from a number of angles, then digitising and retouching the images. The result of running these at 24 frames per second is animation on a par with TV and film cartoons for smoothness and crispness.

OK, so it's fair to say that Broderbund's Prince of Persia must have been a source of inspiration for the character movement in Another World. But, Flashback has improved on its predecessor, and on Prince of Persia, by a mile when it comes to smoothness of animation and attention to detail. Running into walls, or falling off ledges, Conrad bounces, falls over, stumbles and picks himself up; everything from the initial arm-flailing teeter at the edge, to the final bone squelching thud as the body bounces against the ground, is beautifully animated, with detail that even includes the way his jacket flaps in the wind.

Conrad can walk, run, crouch, roll forward, climb up or down, or even just dangle for a while. There's also a set running jump where he will automatically make a long leap and grab on to any convenient ledge without you having to pace the run-up. Since he won't miss the catch, making jumps isn't really one of the main problems of the game as it is in Persia. Funnily enough, while he will be pushing up the daisies after a two storey fall to the ground, Conrad can happily survive a five storey drop down a lift shaft by catching a ledge (with his bare hands, I might add) just before he hits the ground. Dislocated shoulders? Never.

Stick a gun in his hand and he'll perform even more tricks, and there's also the collection of useful gadgets he amasses in the inventory. But even so, it's not a difficult control system to get the hang of. Using only the keyboard is fine most of the time, but I did find the game, unsurprisingly enough, a hell of a lot easier with a two button joystick. There is a zoom mode which brings you into a close-up when you're battling it out with someone, which was fine as a novelty but is actually more off-putting than anything else when things start to hot up.

Gameplay

But our hero being a great little mover doesn't necessarily make for a great game. As I said earlier, Flashback's roots are in traditional platform gameplay, but mixed with high-quality, detailed backdrops, cinematic sequences and the sort of problems and dialogue (albeit very limited and occasional) that are more common in a graphic adventure. There are six main levels in all, and around 200 game screens, with a choice of three levels of difficulty (the difference is only in the number of bombs, mines, mutants and guards, etc).

Conrad has his holocube to fill him in on bits of the past, and more of the story (and several regular actions) are shown with polygon-based animated sequences at key points in the game.

This usually happens after puzzling your way through a key problem, and there's plenty of problem solving to be done throughout the game, although a lot of it is along the lines of 'can't get to point A until you trigger the switch at point B to get at the key at point C', etc. Beyond that, there are a number of more interesting set-piece puzzles, which involve talking to the right people, backtracking, and working out when, where and how to use the right piece of equipment along the way.

For example, in the second level Conrad discovers that his ticket to Earth can be won in the Death Tower game, but to

Far left: With Flashback's static screens, edging in with gun drawn (or rolling in shooting) is the only safe way to proceed.

What do you do on a city street in broad daylight with civilians standing round? Draw your gun and find out who's trying to sneak up on you, that's what.

Alternatively...

Prince of Persia 2
Electronic Arts/Broderbund, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 21
Jordan Mechner's platfrom classic set new standards in character animation when it first came out. It's now had a complete facelift and grown considerably larger and tougher, while retaining the charm of the original. The duelling and the hidden traps are hard to beat.

Another World
Delphine/US Gold, £30.99
Rated 8, Issue 7
Flashback's predecessor has Lester the scientist being transported to an alien world via a bolt of lightning and struggling to find his way back to Earth. Superb graphics and exciting set pieces recommend this platform game, but the main drawback is it's not difficult enough.

enter he needs the right papers. Someone will sell him these if he asks in the right places and has the cash ready. Despite the recession, surprising amounts of dosh are just left lying around the floor, which always helps, but even arcade heroes have to work sometimes, so get an ID card, a work permit and drop in to the job centre.

There are any number of objects to find, fight for or buy along the way, including exploding mice (honest), credit cards, gravity belts, keys and a teleporter. The latter adds a nice twist, because you can throw the receiver where you want it, then trigger the teleport command device to zap you over to that spot. It's a great way to get past obstacles or down long drops and back to safety. Similarly, you can always lob a handy stone from above to distract a guard, then generously slam a couple of bullets into his back.

And as for weaponry, ah, this is the life. Only the one gun, mind you, but spent cartridges fly from the chamber and clatter on the floor, and dust and debris fly up as bullets thunder into the wall. The gunfire sounds different depending on where you are; sometimes muffled, sometimes booming out in an enclosed space. And, best of all, you never need to reload.

Maybe I need some professional help, but the gun is such a satisfying number that it affects the way you approach the game; namely the temptation to come in rolling and shooting, when a more circumspect approach would've been better. But, hey, who cares if you take a few hits when you have the chance to terminate with *extreme* prejudice? I've had so much fun I'd buy the game just for the gun.

Just to be picky, I'd have to say that it would be nice to be able to jump and shoot at the same time, or even just to be able to jump off the lifts half-way down or up. I couldn't help but be reminded of Elevator Action from years back, and was dying to jump up and shoot out the lights, or some other equally anti-social act.

A question of size

The biggest criticism of Another World was that it was too small and quickly finished. This is anything but the case with Flashback, which has greater detail, more complex images, better scenery and animation, good sound and is a much larger game. But I've a feeling that perhaps that's not all a good thing. Another World had loads of atmosphere, unfortunately Flashback isn't always consistent in this respect because it's too sprawling.

This isn't a problem where the stages are smaller, or when you're discovering clues, but later there are occasions when Flashback loses its sense of purpose and becomes more than a little mindless. The end of the fifth level is the main culprit, where there's a lack of variety in the opposition, and endless unlocking of doors and traveling up and down lifts between the interesting bits. I could've been standing in front of umpteen coin-op games playing this sort of level with much the same blank look on my face.

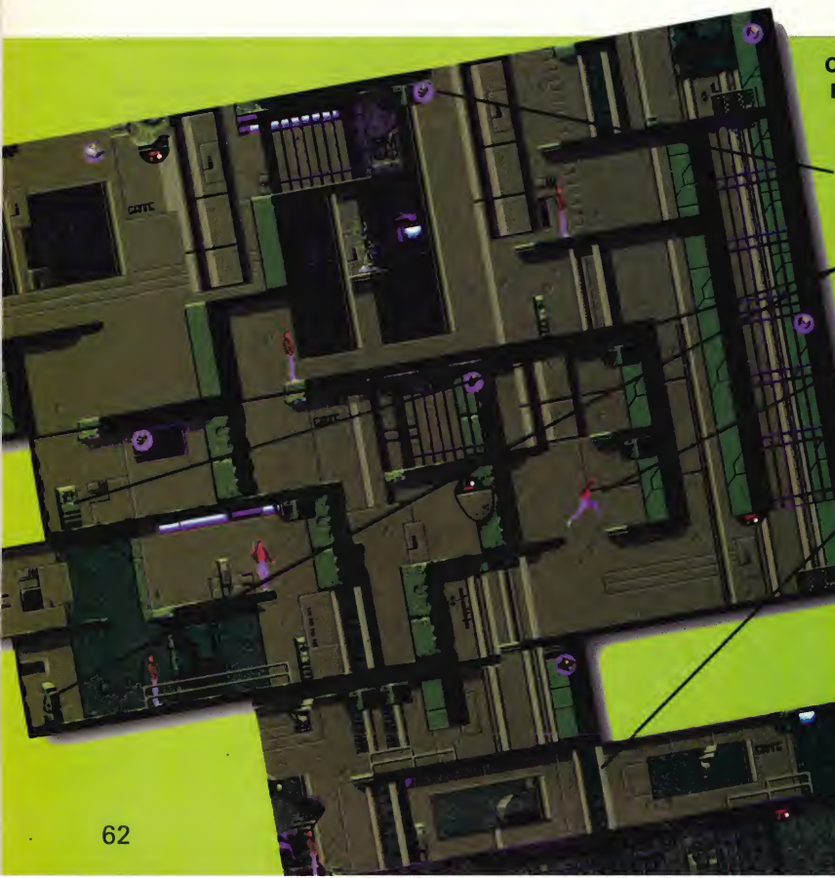
To be fair, though, that's the exception rather than the rule. Flashback is more than a Prince of Persia clone with guns, and has plenty of character of its own. It had me stumped on several occasions, swearing sometimes (particularly at the copy protection), and engrossed for hours. I'd shell out precious cash for this and walk away happy any day.

■ John Bennett

Techspec *Other than requiring 8Mb of hard disk space, there are no particular problems with running Flashback, although less powerful 286 machines may have trouble running the game at a comfortable speed.*

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	8Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✗	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✓	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✗
Performance					
Optimum speed	20MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict A great combination of thought, action and animation. rating **8**



Compared with Another World, Flashback is a huge game, taking place over six main levels.

The currently selected item in the inventory is shown at the top right of the screen

Recharging points for his shield, and Save Game terminals

The character animation is smooth and detailed, particularly when Conrad is running or jumping like this.

Locked doors and lift shafts are regular features that need to be passed on all of the levels

The opposition is not that varied, but they are interesting and also very difficult to dispose of. Here, 'Mr Blobby' meets his maker. Tough ...

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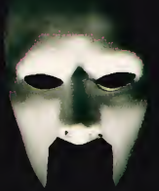

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Title	**Blue Force**
Publisher	**Accolade /Tsunami**
Contact	**(081) 877 0880**
Price	**£39.99**

Jake Ryan is not your average hero. He isn't mean and ruthless like Dirty Harry, nor handsome and daring like Martin Riggs. He's just a big softie who lives with granny, works with deprived kids and enjoys walking the dog.

It's your first day on the job. Your uniform is clean and pressed, your motorbike is gleaming and, even worse, you're keen. Give it a week, though, and you'll be showing signs of boredom, cynicism and general apathy. Welcome to the club.

Blue Force

I think I missed my vocation in life when I decided not to join the police. All that waving guns around, making sarcastic remarks and running my hands up and down criminals' legs. Oh well, I'll just have to play Blue Force instead

When a number of Sierra employees broke away to form Tsunami, they took with them Jim Walls, the former policeman who acted as game designer on the Police Quest series. His latest adventure is Blue Force, and once again he has drawn on his considerable experience to give you the chance to play at cops and robbers. Or in this case, cops, murderers and arms dealers.

Blue Force is an everyday tale of American police. On a quiet summer evening back in 1984, officer John Ryan and his wife Jackie were gunned down in their family home. Their young son, Jake, survived and was brought up by his grandmother, Frannie Ryan. Despite his childhood trauma, Jake was determined to follow the Ryan tradition and join the force. Helped by his uncle Lyle, now a private investigator, Jake finally made it through police academy and landed a position at Jackson Beach police department. Lyle never was able to solve the gruesome murders of John and Jackie Ryan, so it's up to Jake to uncover new evidence and bring the killers to justice.

See that Thora Hird? That's your granny, that is. That's who you live with. No, really.

Playing the part of Jake Ryan, the game begins, surprise, surprise, on day one of your new job. You've been assigned the call sign Roamer One, which effectively means that you have the task of patrolling the whole town on your motorbike and helping out where needed. The action takes place over five days, though not five consecutive days, I hasten to add.

On only your second day at work you are knocked off your motorbike by a speeding motorist and have to spend a couple of months resting up. It may not be the most auspicious start to your career, it has to be said, but things will get a lot hairier than that, I can tell you.

You have been called to sort out a disturbance at the harbour. A fat, hairy maniac has beaten up a young boy and is now holding his mother at gun point. And what were they arguing about? Baseball cards. I ask you.

Following correct police procedures, you radio for assistance. Taking on an armed man on your own would be foolish. Taking on a fully tooled-up Giant Haystacks alone is tantamount to suicide. And whatever he says, don't put down that gun!

The only way to deal with Mr Hirsute here is to keep him talking. You're so unbelievably boring that he'd rather give himself up than listen to you. All that remains to be done is haul him off to jail and book his fat ass.

Old Carter runs the boat rental place over at the marina. He's a keen fisherman and also has an interest in old coins. That could be worth remembering, especially if you need to get him out of the shop.

Proceeding with caution

Still, I'm getting ahead of myself here. The first couple of days give you the chance to get into the game by providing you with a few seemingly unconnected incidents to deal with. Providing that you act on the various hints dropped along the way, follow correct police procedure to the letter and, most importantly, keep your head, you should be able to make it through the early stages without too many problems. Mess up and you won't make it through at all. Trying to arrest an armed lunatic without calling for assistance is not advisable, however lucky you might be feeling. It'll all end in tears, or more specifically, your granny's tears when she's crying at your funeral. And even if you don't get yourself killed, a small indiscretion such as failing to book your suspect will land you the sack. Either way, it spells game over in capital letters.

Later on, Blue Force gets quite a bit tougher. It's definitely worth saving the game as you go along, using all the available slots where possible. Like many adventures, it is a very linear game, and certain tasks must be fulfilled before you are able to progress. However, it is all too easy to overlook something with the result that you get thoroughly stuck later on.

At one point in the story, Jake has to go off and explore a warehouse on a small island. Sure, you can climb into your boat and sail merrily away, but unless you pick up a couple of important items from the marina to start with, it will prove a fruitless and frustrating journey. Needless to say, if you find yourself in such a situation, it's a hell of a lot easier to load up an earlier saved game than it is to backtrack a long way.

If you're the sort of person who ends up throwing your monitor through the window when you get frustrated with a problem, Blue Force could well end up testing your patience to the limit. In my books, that's not a bad thing, however. There is nothing worse than forking out a lot of money for a game only to have it finished in a couple of days. I like a challenge, and Blue Force certainly provides that. Admittedly, it isn't all that big a game, but unless you're an adventure genius, the problems are sufficiently difficult to keep you playing for quite some time.

Storywise, it's not too bad either. While it isn't funny in a Monkey Island sort of way, I still found myself having the odd chuckle every now and then. It was enjoyable and entertaining, and I really wanted to complete the game in order to see how it turned out. The plot could be described as predictable, but getting it to unfold is another matter altogether. Making progress feels like a real achievement, and that, I think, is a good sign.

Yes, the usual stereotypes do crop up, but at least Jake Ryan is not your usual six foot two, eyes of blue, lantern-jawed hero. Mr Charisma he ain't. In fact, he's a bit of a sad character, really. Put politely, he's not much of a looker, he always wears the same grey jeans, trainers and stripey T-shirt when out of uniform, and worst of all, he still lives with his granny. No wonder he's not having much luck with the pretty girl who works at the jail.

Getting back to reality

Right, now I've sung the game's praises, it's time to pick nits. At the end of your

If you needed any proof as to what sort of character you're playing, just take a look at what's on his PC. Yup, it's Wacky Funsters. Need I say more?

Alternatively...

Police Quest 3
Sierra, £39.99
Rated 7, Issue 2

Before producing Blue Force for Tsunami, Jim Walls worked as game designer on Sierra's Police Quest series. Impressive graphics coupled with a soundtrack by Jan Hammer make this game an attractive proposition to cop opera fans, but the puzzles are not as testing as they might be.

Overall, the story develops quite predictably, but it still manages to hook you in until the end.

Ringworld: Revenge of the Patriarch
Accolade/Tsunami, £39.99
Rated 6, Issue 19

If you like the Blue Force style of game but don't fancy the subject matter, Tsunami has also produced an adventure based on Larry Niven's Ringworld. It has a similar interface to Blue Force, but in keeping with its science fiction theme, the atmosphere is very different. Nice graphics, a good storyline and some testing puzzles add up to a very decent game.

first day on the beat, you will return to your granny's house for a spot of supper and a good night's kip. Next to the living room area is an office, or what granny refers to as the den, and in the aforementioned den you should discover your dad's old PC. If you try and use the computer at this stage of the game, however, it will cheerfully inform you that this is not a good idea while your granny is optimising the hard disk. Ha ha.

Later on, though, you will be able to get to grips with the machine. And what do we do we find installed on the hard disk? Wacky Funsters, no less. Aside from being an extremely damning indictment of your character's social skills, it also leads me to suspect that there is something fishy going on. If this is your dad's PC, and, remember, he died back in 1984, then how come Wacky Funsters and Tsunami's other releases, Ringworld and Protostar, are able to run on it? What is going on, Tsunami? I have spotted an anachronism and I claim my five pounds!

Getting back to reality for a moment, I should point out that the game does contain some colourful language. Being bad guys, criminals tend to use a few choice words, and although asterisks, exclamation marks and so forth have been substituted for most of the letters, it wouldn't take long for a child of average intelligence to work out what they meant. You have been warned.

Even so, Blue Force is a decent game, and is also very easy to use. The mouse-driven interface posed no problems at all. Clicking on the right mouse button brings up a police badge-shaped menu which allows you to select your actions. The actions available are looking, touching or using, walking, speaking and a Tsunami icon which brings up a further options menu for saving, reloading, exiting the game and so forth. Once you have selected an action, clicking the left button will enable you to walk to, examine, look at or talk to whichever part of the screen the cursor is positioned over. It's a simple enough system that even I, patron saint of ineptitude, can use.

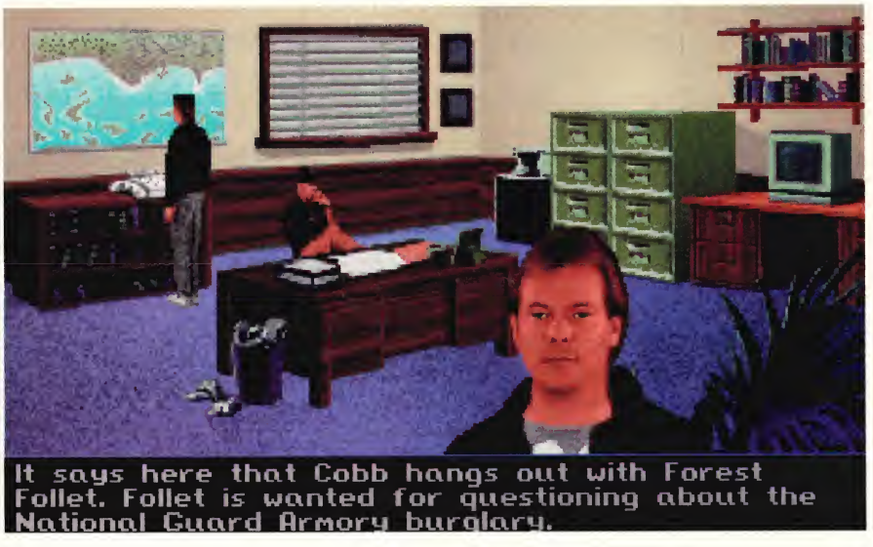
Blue Force looks pretty good, too. The graphics are of the digitised variety and the animation is reasonably realistic. The only drawback here is that, on a slow machine such as my 20MHz 386SX, you could find yourself drumming your fingers whilst the game runs through some of its numerous animated sequences, and the scrolling is a bit on the jerky side. I would have preferred it if I had been able to skip through some of the scenes, because once you have watched Jake ambling slowly from one end of the pier

to the other, you don't particularly want to see it again. At least, I didn't.

Blue Force has quite a good atmosphere, and if you possess one of the soundboards supported by the game, the soundtrack adds considerably to this. The same cannot be said if you are using the PC speaker, however. Take my word for it, you will soon be reaching for the volume control. To be fair, though, this is more a limitation of the hardware than the game itself.

Blue Force is certainly a well thought out and enjoyable game. It could do with being a tad larger, and a few extra locations might spice things up a bit, but on the whole I have very few complaints. It doesn't break down any technological barriers, and there really isn't anything in the game that I haven't seen before. Having said that, I had a good time playing it, and that, in terms of sheer entertainment, is what really counts.

■ Cal Jones



Lyle Jamison was your late dad's best buddy. A private investigator, he failed to solve your parent's murder. Still, he's the best person to turn to when you uncover fresh evidence.

Techspec

You need a minimum of a 16MHz 386SX running MS-DOS 5.0 or greater, VGA and Microsoft compatible mouse. Only available on 3.5" disk. CD-ROM users need 20K hard disk space for save games.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	10Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	25MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	590K				

Verdict
Nothing new, but attractive and entertaining nonetheless

rating **7**

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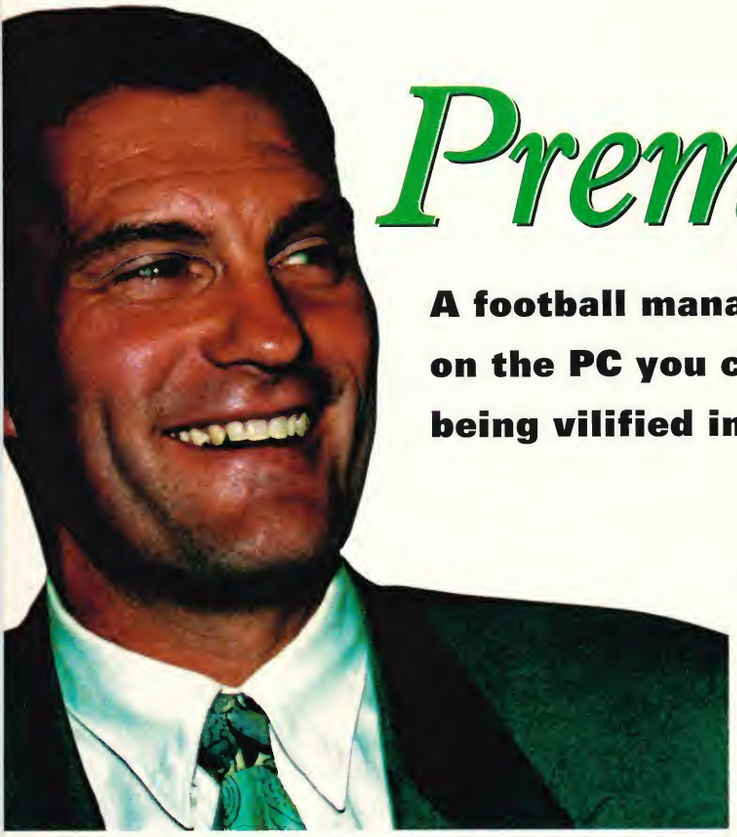
Title	**Premier Manager**
Publisher	**Gremlin Graphics**
Contact	**(0742) 753423**
Price	**£29.99**

Prudent buying on the transfer market and an unhealthy reliance on a route one approach to the game have Wycombe Wanderers out of the conference. The first division can't be far away ...



Premier Manager

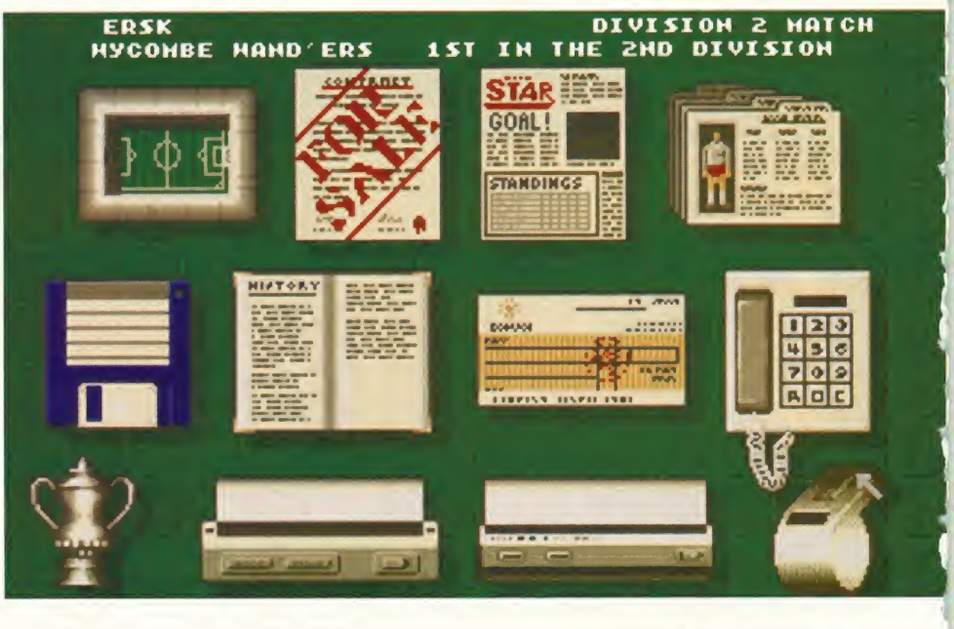
A football manager's lot is rarely a happy one, but at least on the PC you can take the losses on the chin without being vilified in the tabloid press

The publisher's puff piece in the manual is never the most reliable of information sources, but Gremlin has got it about right when it stresses Premier Manager's playability over complexity. Strange, really, that no-one thought of this factor before. While US Gold's The Manager drowned the player in a wealth of financial statistics, and the original Championship Manager disappeared up its own backside trying to work out the results of the Icelandic League division three, Premier Manager concentrates on the core elements of football management simulation: assembling a skilful team under financial constraints, determining a formation and style most likely to succeed, then letting you thrash it out through the divisions and various cups. It also has a number of nice touches which pull it above the norm.

However, anyone buying it in the hope that they can pitch straight into the circus that is the Premier League can think again. Despite its name, you can't actually choose to manage a Premier League club — nor even the club of your choice. With a nod to the real world, the game makes you start small. In the Conference. Now there may be a certain romance in the notion of Stalybridge Celtic, Merthyr Tydfil, or even Woking, fighting their way to the big time in your capable hands, but I suspect most players simply want to set themselves up at their first choice team, buy up the players they reckon the club should have bought in the first place and see if they can do better on the computer than the present real-life motley crew.

The idea behind Premier Manager is that if you do well with your small club, you can either take them through the divisions, or job-hop your way to the top. At the end of each season, job offers from other clubs will come your way — or, of course, you may get the sack. But whether you ever get to manage the team you support is more like pot luck.

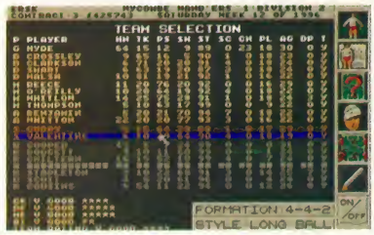
The game can be played by one player, or up to four simultaneously. As with most games, playing with a friend is undoubtedly more fun, especially in 'derby' matches when you play each other (when it's all the more likely to lead to tears), although eventually PC Review



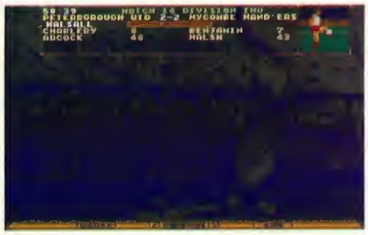
This is the main menu screen, from which you acess all the game's options, from making ground improvements, buying and selling players, and selecting your team for each match. All the club's accounting functions can be found behind the cheque icon, and the team coaches and physio are always at the end of a phone.

Two Minutes *of edited highlights*

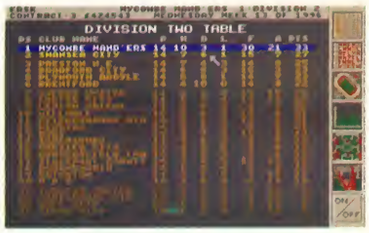
There are no easy games in football these days, Brian. Even though Wycombe are rated more highly in every department, there's always a chance they'll just play us off the park.



The long ball game may not be pretty, but it's effective. At least Wycombe doesn't have a problem scoring goals. Shore up the defence, stick the two strikers up front and hope for the best.



"Relax, sit back and enjoy it ... I expect to win" — even though they've just equalised. Plenty of time to go yet, and remember, Brian, it only takes a second to score a goal.



Despite not beating Peterborough, Wycombe are still sitting pretty at the top of the second division. Note the massive and disproportionate number of goals scored and goals against.

went for a more bizarre — and expensive — option, with, at one point, three separate games of Premier Manager under three different managers on three different PCs and all of us in charge of Wycombe Wanderers. This seemingly pointless exercise at least demonstrated two useful things: firstly, the game plays equally well on slow as well as fast PCs, with, say, a 12MHz 286 as a workable minimum (although using a sound card will slow it down); and secondly, we all ended up making similar progress at a comparable rate, often buying up the same players without prior consultation, which suggests that the random factors in the game may not be as random as they appear.

Having chosen your Conference team, your twin main concerns are team selection and generating enough money to be able to buy in players. Rather dauntingly, the manual suggests that you will need to upgrade your ground facilities in order to conform with the Taylor Report; in practice, improving the stadium brings in even more fans, which brings in even more money.

You start off with 15 players in your squad, all referred to by their real-life names — at least at the time of programming, since Gremlin can hardly be blamed for failing to incorporate the recent haemorrhaging from Nottingham Forest or Crystal Palace. However, there is the welcome facility to edit the players' names, so you can always keep your team bang up to date if you so wish.

As with all soccer management games, the players are rated, according to their handling, tackling, passing and shooting skills, and additionally rated for stamina. You should have two players with significantly high handling skills — the goalkeeper and reserve. The skill ratings are — or appear to be — only relevant to the positions played. In other words, a defence should be rated highly for tackling skills and this will directly affect the matches, but their passing and shooting scores don't appear to have much bearing on the way they play. For example,

You can go to all the trouble of dialling in those numbers if you like, but simply clicking on the name will give you access to the coaches, scout and physio. Injured players should be treated if they are to recover, the scout will find you players for your team, although since they'll still be under contract, they'll be expensive, and the coaches will bring your players up to scratch.

Wycombe's midfielder Dave Carroll is rated highly for passing, but only scores six under shooting skills — yet he was my top scorer in our first season in the Conference with a laudable 28 goals to his name. All those goals could hardly have been intended as crosses.

So, rather than worrying overmuch about aggregate or relative ratings, all you need to do is pick an eleven in which the defenders are huge tacklers, the midfield elegant passers, and the forwards sharp shooters, and the championship beckons.

Alongside this, the collective prowess of your defenders, midfield and attack is rated in descriptive terms, from 'fair' (on a scale of one to five stars), through 'good' (with the same star rating), 'v. good' (with stars), 'superb' (with stars), 'world class', 'exceptional', to 'the ultimate'. When you try to buy a player, or view the ratings of the opposition, it is these categories you see on screen — only your own team has its skills marked in specific points as well.

Before you can actually send the team rushing out on to the pitch, you need to determine the formation and playing style. Sadly, though I suppose it's reasonably authentic, playing the long ball game in 4-4-2, or 5-3-2 if you have a good batch of defenders, often yields the desired results, especially as so many of the other teams are playing similarly. You also do seem to get more 'shock' wins over better-rated sides playing long ball tactics.

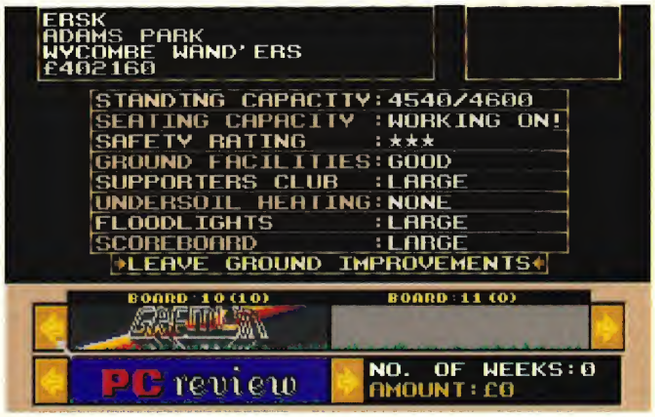
Luckily, you won't actually have to watch all these dreary hoof-it-forward games. Gremlin has eschewed the idea of showing the whole match pictorially, for a series of animated close-ups the size of a postage stamp in the top right of the screen. Once you realise there are only about six or seven different animations and no changes of strip, you can stop being distracted by this and watch instead the plain horizontal bar which denotes the direction of play. The non-Premier players in the PC Review office have been utterly bemused by the amount of excitement and anguish that has been generated by the sight of a brown dot swinging from one end of a brown line to the other, but, hey, that's football.

What isn't quite so consistent is the fact that throughout my managerial career so far, my teams have always been the highest-scoring in the division — by a mile and also conceded by far the most goals. Where the other teams are grinding out the usual 0-0 draws, or 1-0 wins,

Wycombe will be spectacularly embroiled in knife-edge 2-3, 2-4, or 3-3 thrillers, and Wycombe players will be crowding out the division's top scorers' lists everywhere.

To build up your squad's skills, you have two options: invest in a coaching staff, and buy on the transfer market. By appointing coaches to work on specific skill ratings, you can transform 'fair' players to 'very good' in the course of the season — so long as you pay them enough money to do the job properly. You can approach the transfer market in two ways, either through appointing a scout to target desirable players, or buying players who are up for sale. On the open market, you cannot buy players presently at a club two or more divisions above you, and since, right at the beginning, many players in the third division or Conference will be little better than your current team, it's worth splashing out on a scout and spending more to poach players from other clubs. By the time you reach Division Two, however, 'superb' players up for sale in Division One can be bought for a much more realistic price.

Selling space on your advertising hoardings brings in some welcome cash. You could be forgiven for barely recognising PC Review from this rendition here, especially as, in an uncharacteristic display of meanness, we're not actually offering any money at the moment.



Techspec

Premier Manager is refreshingly undemanding. It comes on a single high density disk (low density versions are available from the publisher), and takes up a mere 1Mb, plus your saved games, on hard disk. You'll also need both a mouse and the keyboard.

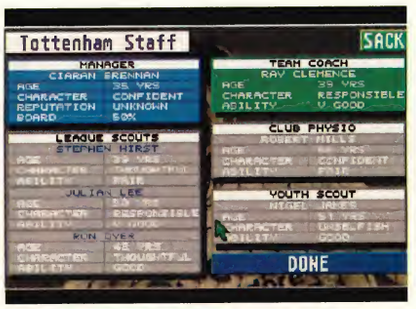
Disk requirements						
	High density	✓				
	Hard disk only	✗				
	Space taken on hard disk	1.3Mb				
Graphic modes						
	CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
	VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards						
	Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control						
	Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✗	Mouse	✓
Performance						
	Optimum speed	12MHz				
	Minimum memory	640K				
	Free RAM required	580K				

rating **7**

Verdict
Very playable, no-frills management game

Alternatively...

The Manager
US Gold, £37.99
Rated 6, Issue 11
Solid and serious simulation which requires you to be much more of a financial wizard as well as team manager than Premier Manager. Has the best way of portraying matches, with 256-colour animated 'highlights' of goals or near-misses. However, it's also rather more complex and takes longer to struggle through each season.



Championship Manager 93
Domark, £29.99
This is certainly not to be confused with the original Championship Manager, which was dull and appallingly slow, the 93 version has happily smoothed out a lot of the glitches, updated players' names properly (the previous version used a ghastly mish-mash of fictitious names), and generally transformed itself from a donkey, to a credible strike force. Worth checking out.

All this presupposes that you have the money in the bank to go on a spending spree. Apart from the money given to you by the board at the beginning of the season, and money made from the sale of players (don't pare down your squad too much, because players do get injured, and also, curiously, go off on jury service), the commercial activity which will keep you busiest is selling off the advertising hoardings which surround the pitch. Gremlin has rounded up a number of potential sponsors: — highly dodgy outfits such as Gremlin Graphics, Zool, and indeed PC Review, as well as a whole load of Amiga magazines, which belies the program's origins — which will pay you to take space on the boards. PC Review, in particular, seems strangely generous with its cash. Sponsors buy space for varying lengths of time, so you'll find boards becoming vacant again throughout the season and you need to keep them filled up to keep the money flowing in.

This is one of the those neat features which actually becomes rather tedious over time. It's not helped by the fact that the easiest way to see which boards are free is under the finances menu, but to do anything about it you have to come out of that and go into the stadium menu, then scroll through all your 48 hoardings and match them up with potentially 48 different advertisers. It could really have been made more of a one-stop process.

Some features in the game are there for expediency rather than authenticity. If you are level after 90 minutes in a Cup match, you will *always* go into extra time, rather than the game being replayed first, and there are promotional play-offs in the Conference, which I'm certainly not going to quibble about, since it was how I got out of that division in the first place. What is unforgivable, though, is the lack of any pat on the back, not even a congratulatory screen, when in a staggering feat of giant-killing, Wycombe Wanderers won the FA Cup (they were in Division Three at the time). Surely this historic moment deserved more than just an extra £300,000 to spend the next season.

More genuinely annoying is the fact that the manual is the original Amiga booklet, so that few of the illustrated screens match the PC displays, and some of the features listed simply aren't included in the PC version. It also has a copy protection codewheel from hell: featuring black numbers on a black background and featuring football strips more garish than anything Arsenal could ever have dreamed up.

However, by paring off many irrelevant features of other football management games, Premier Manager is probably the most accessible and playable of the current batch around. It's made even more playable by the fact that, at the beginning anyway, it really isn't that difficult to progress quickly — after all, who wants to be really realistic and spend six years sitting in the middle of the Conference, followed by one goodish season before narrowly escaping relegation, and finally hauling yourself out around about nine years after you start?

■ Christina Erskine

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Title	**Disney's Beauty and the Beast**
Publisher	**Infogrames**
Contact	**(071) 738 8199**
Price	**£34.99**

Poor old Beast hasn't had much luck wooing his Belle, so the magical household implements have decided to organise a ball. So that everything can be ready in time, you need to help out with the preparation.

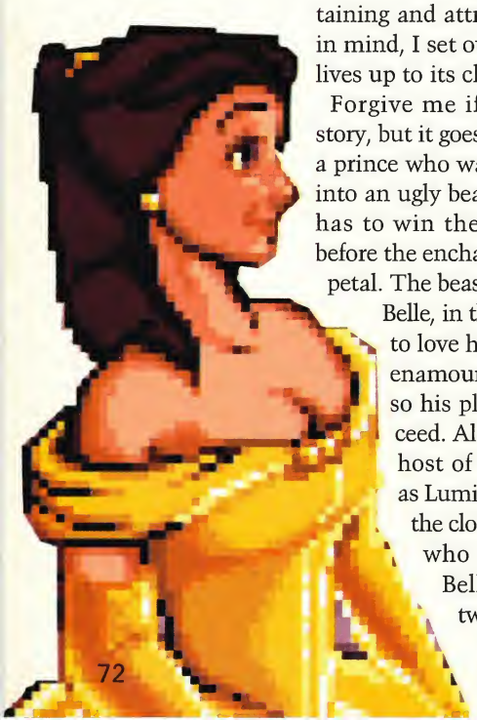
Before the ball can take place, there are five tasks to complete. Pick flowers from the garden, help make Belle's gown, teach Lumiere to dance, bake a cake or compose the music for the waltz. Select the chore of your choice from the stained glass window.

Disney's Beauty

Infogrames is releasing an educational title based on the cartoon of the same name. Could this be the most romantic game ever?

Not being the gentlest person in the world, I was somewhat bemused when Beauty and the Beast appeared on my desk. With no guns and no violence, it didn't look like the kind of game to appeal to a terminal cynic with psychotic tendencies. Still, that's hardly the point. Billed as a family game, with an emphasis on the seven to 12 age group, Beauty and the Beast is designed primarily as an educational tool, but it aims to be entertaining and attractive as well. With this in mind, I set out to discover how well it lives up to its claim.

Forgive me if you already know the story, but it goes like this. In a castle lives a prince who was magically transformed into an ugly beast. To break the spell he has to win the love of a good woman before the enchanted rose has lost its last petal. The beast kidnaps a beautiful girl, Belle, in the hope that she can grow to love him. But Belle is less than enamoured by the fierce creature, so his ploy looks unlikely to succeed. Also living in the castle is a host of enchanted objects, such as Lumiere the candle, Cogsworth the clock, and a motherly teapot, who are organising a ball in Belle's honour to bring the two closer together.



Time is running out and there is much preparation for the ball. This is where you come in. There are five tasks to perform, each in a different area of the castle, demanding a different ability, memory, organisation, dexterity, reflexes, or nimbleness. There are two levels of difficulty. On the easier one, tasks are simple, and you only have to do one before you can watch the ball. Far more demanding on the harder level, they must all be done in a certain time so the ball can take place, a challenging test even for an adult.

It doesn't matter which task you take on first. Some are trickier than others, notably the cake-baking game. This involves guiding bouncing eggs though an obstacle course of pots, pans, sponges and other kitchen utensils so that they end up in a mixing bowl. This is far from easy. There are three cakes to bake, with a different obstacle course for each. Although this was my favourite bit of the game, I still can't figure out why you'd need three cakes for a candle lit meal for two. I suppose it's just a bit of poetic licence.

Alternatively...

Mario is Missing
Mindscape, £39.99
Rated 5, Issue 17
A brave effort to make geography interesting via Mario, who travels around the world, learning about heritage and solving puzzles. Bright, colourful and informative, but repetitive and too simple.

Disney Animation Studio
Disney/Infogrames, £99.99
Rated 8, Issue 7
This enables you to create a cartoon which can be backed up by sound, if you own a Sound Blaster, Tandy sound or Disney Sound Source. Pricey, but a nice tool nonetheless.

What better way to decorate the ballroom than with flowers? Trouble is, it's the middle of winter and the the bloomin' plants are covered with snow. Feather Duster will brush away the drifts to reveal the matching pairs. Yup, it's the old memory game.

Once I've skilfully paired up all the bouquets, summer returns to the garden and the flowers can be picked. Right, Now I'm off to help out somewhere else. Anyone need killing or maiming? No? Oh well, I'll just have to turn my talents to baking instead.

On the easy level, you need only complete one task before the ball can commence. You are rewarded by seeing the happy couple waltzing the night away. All together now, aah. Almost brought a lump to the throat of this old hack.

and the Beast

In the second game you help create Belle's ballgown by selecting pieces of coloured cloth moving down a clothes line. It's a bit like playing Tetris. You are given a sequence of colours to match, and need to get three (four on the hard level) pieces of each to the bottom of the line before they can be put in the cupboard. Once the line fills up you start again.

The third game, agility based, involves guiding Lumiere around a tiered cake to collect cherries. Various pieces of cutlery and crockery whizz around the cake trying to knock Lumiere down. Not nearly as easy as it sounds, and if you're using a dodgy mouse it soon gets frustrating.

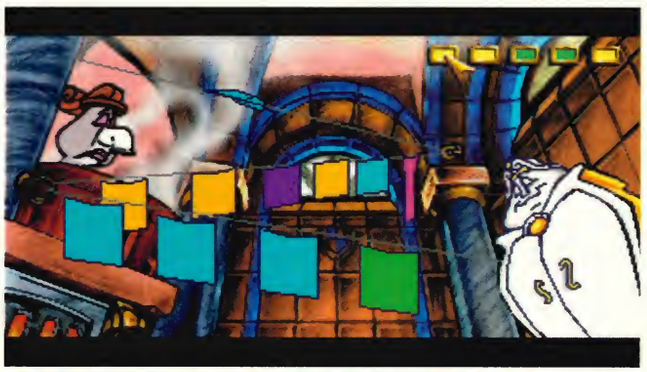
The last two games are based on memory. The garden game requires you to memorise the location of different coloured plants in a garden so that you can pair them up. In the other game, Cogsworth shows you a sequence of symbols which appear on different books in the library. You then select these in the correct order to compose a musical score.

The games involve exercising skills rather than acquiring knowledge. The concepts are simple to grasp and the games are fun. Parents who buy Beauty and the Beast for their children could end up playing it themselves. I just wonder whether it has long lasting appeal. Once you've completed the games on the harder level, I'm not sure that you'd want to come back to it too often. Still, there is something addictive about that egg game.

Where Beauty and the Beast scores over the opposition is that it does look wonderful. Infogrames has made a really good job of recreating the original cartoon graphics on PC. A lot of otherwise good educational software is badly let down by visuals, but the colourful images in this game should immediately appeal to children. Being based on a popular Disney picture doesn't exactly harm it either.

In all, Beauty and the Beast is top class software. It achieves its aim of being good family entertainment and should prove especially valuable to young children. I don't think older players will learn much from it, but it's fun anyway. The fact that even I enjoyed it goes to prove that it must be something special. Either that or I'm getting soft in my old age.

■ **Cal Jones**



Belle needs a dress for the ball, so you must pick the correct colours from the fabric on the clothes line.

Techspec

Beauty and the Beast will run on anything from a 286 up. In addition to the Sound Blaster and Ad Lib soundcards, the Disney Sound Source is also supported. It is much easier to play using a mouse.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	3Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	16MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	550K				

Verdict
A truly appealing family game

rating **8**

Title	**Rags to Riches**
Publisher	**Interplay**
Contact	**(0865) 390029**
Price	**£39.99**

Who wants to be a millionaire? Well me, for one, so I was keen to test my business acumen with Interplay's financial market simulation

Rags to Riches

If your parents handed you $200,000 tomorrow, what would you do? Splash out on a Ferrari? Take that round-the-world cruise you've always wanted? Invest in a plush little apartment? Wrong! Because what you're actually going to do is gamble it all on the stock market.

I say 'all' but actually some of it has been used to rent a one room office near Wall Street. The nicest thing you could say about your new surroundings is that they're basic. Still, we all have to start somewhere, and at least your office contains everything you need to keep an eye on those stocks and shares.

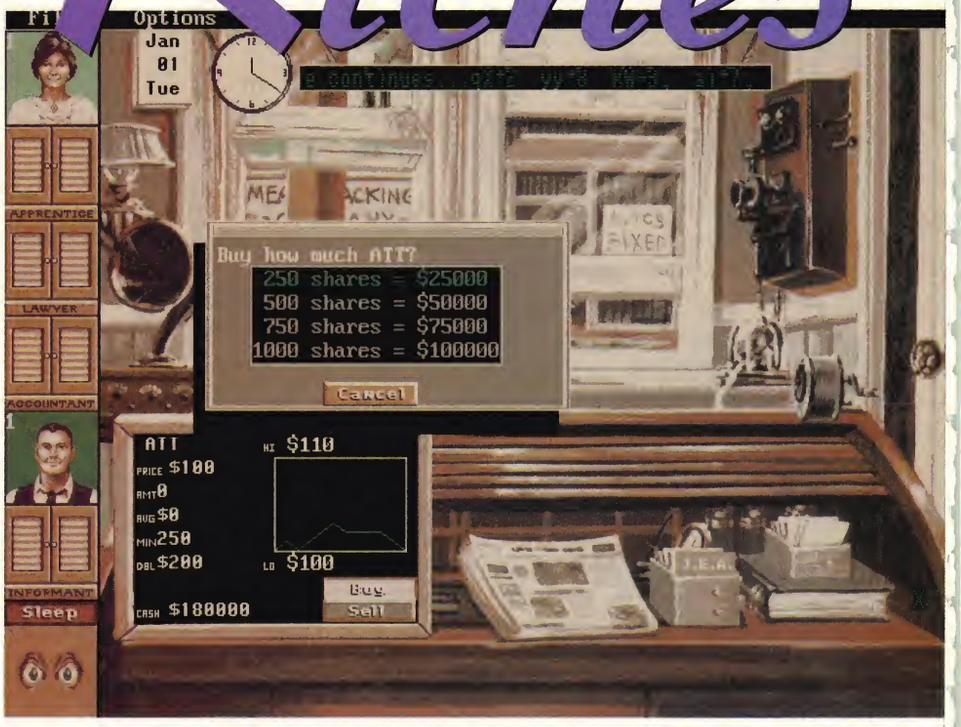
Tools of the trade

The most important piece of equipment is, as you might expect, your computer. This follows the price fluctuations for the four commodities you can deal in: oil, gold, blue chip stocks and treasury bonds. The screen shows the current price of the commodity, how many stocks you own, the average price you paid for them and the amount of cash you have left. It also allows you to buy and sell by clicking on the relevant button.

If you click on the screen itself, the focus commodity will change. I discovered that whenever I tried to buy or sell something, unless the cursor was positioned exactly over the button I'd end up swapping commodity screens instead. This is extremely annoying if you're in a hurry to sell before prices dropped, or ended up buying gold instead of oil, for example. It seems rather stupid and unfair that you could lose so much money by being out by a just couple of pixels.

At the top of the screen you will find the telewrite or ticker, a thin bar which displays all manner of interesting information. It may look like gibberish to the untrained eye, but you need to pay close attention because it's here you get the latest news on events which affect prices.

Similarly, it pays to keep an eye on the television. There are only four channels, so no, you can't catch up on Neighbours, but you might just happen to spot a use-



Your office 1929 style. This is the era of the 1929 Stock Market Crash, so unless you know what you're doing, you could get your fingers burned. You will also find yourself without the advantages of computers and television.

It's never easy making money, especially in the volatile world of stocks and shares. Your ultimate aim is to build yourself up from novice wheeler-dealer to financial giant within a year. This might require some unorthodox, if dirty, tactics.

ful tip regarding things which could shake up the stock market unexpectedly.

No broker worth his salt would want to be without a telephone, and so it has pride of place on your desk. Next to the phone is your Rolodex, which is where you keep your list of contacts. At the start of the game you have only three, your mother, your Wall Street headhunter, Jivaro, and a charity organisation. Of these, only Jivaro sounds immediately useful, but calling either Mom or Sister Mercy can serve a purpose. Keep your Ma happy and she may just offer you a loan, whilst donating money to charity helps to maintain a smooth facade of respectability when you're up to no good on the quiet.

To add to your Rolodex you will need to go out to lunch and meet new faces. Yeah yeah, I know, lunch is for wimps and all that, but it's undoubtedly a great place to do business. Here you contact the insiders for that all important insider information. This is illegal, of course, but lunch is off the record so you shouldn't get caught. The same cannot be said if insiders try to contact you in the office, however. You can get away with it a few times if need be, but too many phone calls will attract unwanted attention from the Security and Exchange Commission. This spells trouble.

The first thing you should do when you move in to your office is to hire some staff. Firstly, you will need a secretary to deal with all your messages and calls, and you can't buy or sell anything unless you employ a pit runner or two. The more pit runners that you have, the quicker you can move stocks, which is rather important in a shifting and volatile market.

Another option is to take on an apprentice. Although he will inevitably make a few mistakes at first, he could prove to be a vaulable asset given time, both in terms of making money and building up a large client base. Apprentices will also run your foreign offices in your absence, so are vital to all your expansion plans.

Later on, you might consider hiring an lawyer. She is useful for holding off the SEC and even if you are caught insider trading, she'll keep your fines or jail sentences to a minimum. An accountant becomes necessary once you have 10 employees under your wing. He can be of great help when the Inland Revenue Service decides to audit you, which could take up anything to a month. Finally, you might want to employ an informant. He can be despatched to spy on rival firms, or even planted in the SEC or IRS. Remember, though, that the SEC disapproves of informants and might decide to investigate you with dire consequences.

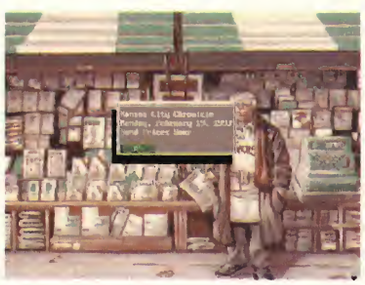
Speculate to accumulate

Right, you've got your office, you've got your staff. Now it's time to make money. The principle couldn't be simpler. Buy low, sell high. In practice, though, it's another matter. You don't need any financial knowledge to play the game, but it certainly helps. The manual is clear and informative, and if you know next to nothing about financial markets, read it first. The educational aspect of Rags to Riches is, in this respect, very strong. One thing I learned was that you can sell short; that is, selling stocks you don't own and then buying them back once the price has dropped. This is one way of covering yourself if a commodity sky-rockets when you don't own any stocks.

The mall is just the place to flaunt your Amex gold card. You can buy anything here: ugly china dogs, real estate, new offices, even racehorses. You've earned it, so now go and spend it.

Two Minutes *of insider trading*

You start off in the humblest of surroundings: a shabby little office complete with leaky roof and cockroaches. It's all that you can afford with the $200K your Mom and Pop kindly loaned you. And there you'll stay unless you hurry up and buy some stocks.



If you want some hot tips, your first port of call should be the friendly neighbourhood news vendor. He's always happy to let you in on the latest business news, so check with him as soon as you arrive in the morning and just before you leave at night.

Of course, if you want the information before anyone else, you have to risk dealing with the "insiders." The best way to do this is over a power lunch. It may cost you $100, but it's a lot safer than receiving calls in your office. That's illegal, of course.

Put all the information to good use and you could make a killing on the stock market. Over a period of time, you might even make enough to afford some more up-market offices. Now you can reward yourself by taking a trip to the mall for some serious shopping.

Once you have cornered the American market, you should aim to expand abroad. This is your London office, and very nice it is too. If you get as far as opening in Japan, then you know you're doing well.

The best way to make money, however, is to absorb as much information as you possibly can from insider tips, television, newspapers, ticker and the international news stand. Then act quickly.

It's no good saving a game, watching how a commodity performs and then restoring the game in the vain hope that you can cash in on your personalised advance knowledge. It doesn't work like that. Although a major event, such as an oil platform explosion, will certainly occur at a set point during the game, the actual stocks behave slightly differently each time you load. In other words, don't bother cheating because it does not pay.

Half the fun of making money is being able to spend it afterwards. If the market is looking quiet and you have a few dollars to spare, then take a trip to the shopping mall. Whether you blow the lot on leather sofas and golfing holidays, or invest it in a more up-market office to impress your clients is your decision. You might even want to expand overseas by purchasing offices in London and Tokyo from Pencil Pushers. Don't branch out too quickly, though, as it involves a quite significant financial outlay and you need to make sure that you still have enough money to trade with.

1929 and all that

At the start of the game you can decide whether to play during the 1929 Stock Market Crash or in the modern day. The appearance of the office, mall and shops reflects the era of your choice, but the principles remain the same. The main difference is that, should you opt for 1929, you'll have a good idea of what history has in store, whereas events in the modern day scenario are more random.

I hate to bring up an old cliché, but Rags to Riches is one of those games which is quite easy to get into, yet is hard to master. Although I seemed to be quite successful at making money, I was still a long, long way from being a millionaire.The interface is straightforward enough, so there are no problems here.

What I didn't like was the fact that it takes absolutely ages to redraw the screen. Admittedly, I was using a 20MHz 386SX, which is not exactly the fastest PC around. Unfortunately, it is still fairly typical of the sort of machine which people have installed in their homes. I hate to think what it would be like on a 10MHz 286 which is supposedly the minimum configuration for Rags to Riches.

The game itself moved quickly enough, but whenever I went from one screen to another, for example, going from the office to the mall, I spent up to 10 seconds staring at a blank monitor. It may be a minor irritation, but it didn't exactly enhance my enjoyment of the game.

Most importantly, though, did I actually like the game? Well, to be honest, I wasn't quite sure. Have you ever watched a rather dull film to the end because you were convinced something exciting was bound to happen in a minute?

Rags to Riches is a bit like that. All the time I was playing I kept thinking I really ought to be enjoying this. Perhaps I don't know enough about the stock market business to appreciate it fully, but I couldn't help thinking that the fun element was missing. It's an absorbing little game and certainly kept me quiet for a few days, but it never really set me alight. If you're the sort of person who follows the financial columns in the newspapers, then by all means give it a go. Me, I'll leave it to the professionals. Who wants to be rich anyway? Bah!

■ Cal Jones

Techspec

Rags to Riches requires a minimum of a 10MHz 286 with DOS 3.1 or greater and colour monitor. Soundboards supported include Pro-Audio Spectrum.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	15Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	✓		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	33MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	575K				

Verdict

Reasonably good fun, if a little unexciting

rating **5**

Alternatively...

A-Train
Maxis/Ocean, £40.99
Rated 7, Issue 12
The main aim of this game is to build a profitable rail network, but it also involves dealing in buildings, real estate and, of course, stocks and shares. The stock market is less complex than in Rags to Riches, but forms only a small part of this highly addictive game. Perhaps a little too easily mastered to keep you occupied for more than a couple of months, but what the hell, it's fun.

Air Bucks 1.2
Impressions, £34.99
Rated 5, Issue 21
Another game involving business strategy, this time set in the cut-throat world of airline travel. You must build up your airline from scratch, expanding your fleet, planning routes and juggling with ticket prices. You play against three rivals who will do their utmost to buy you out on the stock market. On the whole, this is a decent game but suffers from too many unnecessary details.

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Title	**Ishar 2: Messengers of Doom**
Publisher	**Silmarils/Daze Marketing**
Contact	**(071) 328 2762**
Price	**£32.99**

Ishar 2: Messengers of Doom

After the success of Ishar: Legend of the Fortress, Silmarils has felt inspired to produce a follow-up. The big question is, will anyone feel inspired by the game itself?

Ye olde shoppe. Quaint, cosy and darned expensive, especially for tourists like you.

Ishar 2 is yet another role-playing game in the Dungeon Master mould. You know the kind of thing: same old 3D first-person perspective, same old jerky, flick-screen scrolling, same old 90 degree turns. It doesn't look too much different from the original Ishar, or any other RPG for that matter, so exactly what does it have to offer the discerning role-player?

If you missed out on Ishar 1 or its prequel, the Crystals of Arborea, there's really no need to worry at all. Ishar 2 is a stand-alone adventure and requires no familiarity with the previous games. Everything you want to know is contained in the manual, and even then it would hardly be disastrous if you were to get straight into the game without reading about the history of Ishar. It's all traditional role-playing fare, set in a world populated by humans, elves, orcs, dwarves and other familiar races. There are seven islands in all to visit, and the general idea, as ever, is to complete certain quests in order to achieve your goals.

Rather than spending hours rolling up a party of adventurers, you start the game with one pre-determined character: Zurbaran, the new ruler of Ishar. Your first task will be to recruit other party members, and this involves a visit to the local inn. What do you mean, you wouldn't recruit from a pub? Don't you think that all those beer-drinking, dart-throwing and pool-playing skills would come in handy? No? Personally, I think it would make far more sense to check out the local gym or fighters' academy for potential recruits. In this game, however, all the tough dudes hang out in the pub, so if your companions seem a wee bit uncoordinated, you'll know why.

The recruitment aspect is one area where Ishar 2 differs from other RPGs. Since you don't roll up the characters yourself, you can't assume that they're going to get on with each other. Hiring a new member is a democratic business.

Irvan's Island is not the most inspiring place to start your game. It's cold, it's damp, it's foggy, it's a bit like England really. Naturally enough, you want to get off it as soon as possible. That is not as straightforward as it sounds, however.

You need to get off the island, but this cheerful chap won't take kindly to you nicking his boat. Maybe you could try and 'persuade' him at the point of your sword. Seems like a reasonable thing to do under the circumstances.

You may be the ruler of Ishar, but that doesn't mean that you have the last say on who gets recruited and who doesn't. If other party members take a dislike to a potential candidate, they'll take a vote to decide whether he should be allowed to join up. There's no way that a couple of holier-than-thou elves will be seen dead working alongside a murderous orc, however good a fighter he may be. Consequently, you're on to a bit of a loser if you fancy having him on your team.

Similarly, you might as well expect the odd personality clash within your party. A couple of characters could side against another, causing all sorts of problems. Generally this doesn't affect things too much, unless you decide to give someone their marching orders. Members can be made to leave either by asking them to go, or, if you're feeling particualrly vindictive, you could arrange for another character to assassinate them. If you choose the latter option, you could run the risk of upsetting anyone who has aligned themselves with that party member, even to the point where you could spark off a whole series of assassinations.

This was one part of the game which I liked. In Eye of the Beholder, say, you could spend a lot of time choosing classes and alignments for your characters only to find that they have no real bearing on the plot. It's refreshing to find a game in which such things do matter, and that is something in Ishar 2's favour.

What I didn't particularly like about the game was the fact that you're never really quite sure what you're meant do next. You wander around a bit, encounter a character who drops a very subtle hint about your next quest and then you wander around a bit more trying to figure out just what he meant. Unless you pay really close attention to absolutely everything that's said, you will run the risk of missing out on a vital clue. It's all too easy to get yourself lost, or stuck, or both.

It's also too easy to stumble across something you weren't meant to find until later in the game. For example, if you explore the first island in any detail you'll discover an artefact which is being guarded by a near-invincible stone golem. Being curious, you decide to investigate the artefact and wham! The golem pops up and reduces you to dust in a matter of seconds. At that stage of the game, the monsters are tough enough as it is, and I could well do without being massacred by something I wasn't even supposed to meet until later.

Another thing I wasn't particularly keen on was the inventory system. It was somewhat fiddly to use and I wouldn't recommend that anyone attempt to play without a mouse. What annoyed me most was that characters who die lose their belongings, which is a real pain if they're carrying anything vital.

Combat leaves a lot to be desired, too. It's a case of clicking on each character's weapon in turn, and things can get a bit

Just one of the many characters who'll fight first and ask questions later. Cold steel is the only language he understands.

Alternatively...

Eye of the Beholder III
US Gold/SSI, £39.99
Rated 6, Issue 21
A similar style of game to Ishar 2, with both indoor dungeons and outdoor sections. There are lots of puzzles, lots of monsters and, inevitably, lots of getting killed and restoring saved games. It's a tough game and lacks the atmosphere of Beholders 1 and 2, so I'd only recommend it to die-hard fans of the genre.

Crystals of Arborea
Daze, £9.99
The first game in the Ishar series is a good alternative for those operating on a tight budget. Whilst it isn't quite as pretty as Ishar 2 or as sophisticated as games like Ultima Underworld, it's fair bit cheaper then either. Featuring 16,000 locations, there's plenty to keep you occupied and it works well on less powerful machines. Can be played from floppy disk.

Two Minutes *of being wet, miserable and persecuted*

Or maybe not. Suddenly there are armed guards everywhere. Funny, I don't remember seeing any around a minute ago. Were they hiding under the pier? Either way, you find yourselves outnumbered and surrounded. Oops.

Your trusty band of thugs is hauled up before the local lord. Fortunately he's got a sense of humour and you won't find yourselves being hung, drawn and quartered. Yet. Instead he sends you to find his daughter's necklace.

Which just so happens to be in the possession of this delightful fellow. He certainly doesn't have a sense of humour but he does have a hole in his stomach which you would fill quite nicely. Oh dear, time to reload and start again ...

A tourist's guide to the islands

Ishar 2 is one of the prettiest RPGs around, so here's a quick guide to some of the more picturesque sights you'll see.

The village of Zabhorn on Iryan's Isle is all mellow mists and fruitfulness. Just don't drink the water, though: you never know who's been hiding down the well.

The mountain air of Jon's Island is apparently good for the health, which is more than I can say for this hungry looking beastie. Don't forget to pack a sword along with your crampons.

The tree city on Thorm's Island can be quite breath-taking, providing that you have a head for heights. The narrow walkways do have one major disadvantage, however.

Olbar's Island is famous for its splendid castle and its halitosis-ridden dragons. An encounter with this fire-breathing monstrosity will leave you feeling a bit hot under the collar.

You can't have a role-playing game without a dungeon, and you'll find it on Akeer's Island. Why is it you can get into the blind girl's cell, but she can't get out? Very odd.

Ah, I do love a good sunset. The city on Zach's Island is the nearest you'll get to civilisation, and it even has a night-club. Can't quite imagine elves having a good rave, can you?

frantic at times. I would have like to have seen an "all attack" feature, as in Beholder III. This means that you only need click on one button and all your characters attack at once, which is much simpler.

Control problems aside, the fighting itself was not what you'd call true to life. People and monsters seem to stand around at all hours of the day or night just waiting for you to attack them. They won't attack you either unless you venture inside their designated territory, and if you run back a few steps during the fight, they'll just stop and wait for you to come closer again. Hardly realistic, even by gaming standards.

Having got my gripes out of the way, it has to be said that Ishar 2 does have quite a bit going for it. For a start it has a map, which means you're not forced to drag out the squared paper and coloured pencils, thank goodness. It's also very pretty, and doesn't suffer from the usual grey and brown dungeon walls syndrome. There's a variety of locations, and most of the action takes place outdoors. Whether you're walking down city streets or trudging through a swamp, the game gives a good feeling of space and atmosphere. It gets dark at night, lights come on in the houses and you even get a sunset. OK, so the scrolling's a bit ropey, but the graphics divert attention away from that.

So, in basic terms, is Ishar 2 worth your hard-earned cash? For starters it's only £32.99, which is a good £10 cheaper than most games of that standard. Having said that, there is nothing special about it. It looks attractive and is a pleasant enough way of passing the time, but is neither technically excellent nor wonderfully addictive. It may be a long way from being a bad game, but it simply doesn't stand out when compared with other examples of the genre. When it actually comes down to it, if I could only afford to buy one or two RPGs this year, I certainly wouldn't choose Ishar 2.

■ Cal Jones

Techspec

You will need a 386 or better to hear the sound effects and music. It's possible to use the keyboard only, but a mouse is preferable.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	3Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	x	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	20MHz				
Minimum memory	612K				
Free RAM required	560K				

Verdict

Pretty graphics help hide a game engine which is starting to look long in the tooth

rating **6**

Isn't it time for a change?

Same old inn scene. Yawn.

As someone who has trudged through more than her fair share of RPGs, I have to say that they are all starting to look very similar. Games like FTL's Dungeon Master, SSI's Beholder series and even Ultima Underworlds seem to be firmly rooted in the Tolkienesque realm of goblins, orcs and dwarves. A typical game scenario runs something like this: you, Prince Varial of the land Illustria, must travel through the Dungeons of Doom to retrieve the mystic Amulet of Q'qadrach from the evil wizard Baragoth ... This was fine a few years back when RPGs first started appearing on the PC, but it's starting to get boring! Every dungeon contains a squidgy slug monster. Every inn is run by a blousy barmaid in a low-cut bodice. Every party of adventurers includes a tough, stripped-to-the-waist barbarian type, a useless elven mage who keels over at the slightest whiff of trouble, and a bad-tempered, axe-wielding, ale-swilling dwarf. With a beard.

Ever noticed how dwarves are nearly always male? Ultima Underworld is a prime example of this: it features a whole colony of the wee folk and not one of them is female! If you've ever wondered why this is, I'll let you in on a secret. Game designers can't decide what a lady dwarf should look like. Dwarves always have beards, and women, well, don't. So should a female dwarf have facial hair or not? To beard or not to beard ...

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MONKEY ISLAND 2™

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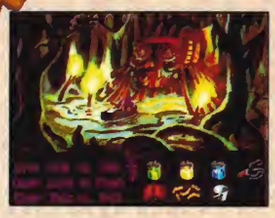

Thicker, richer puzzley goodness

Screen shots are only intended to be illustrative of the gameplay and not the screen graphics which may vary considerably between different formats in quality and appearance and are subject to the computers specifications.

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Title	**Ambush at Sorinor**
Publisher	**Mindcraft/Empire**
Contact	**(081) 343 7337**
Price	**£39.99**

Ambush At Sorinor comes complete with two tutorials, one explaining the custom mission tool, the other taking you through the basics of the game. This is what happens in the latter...

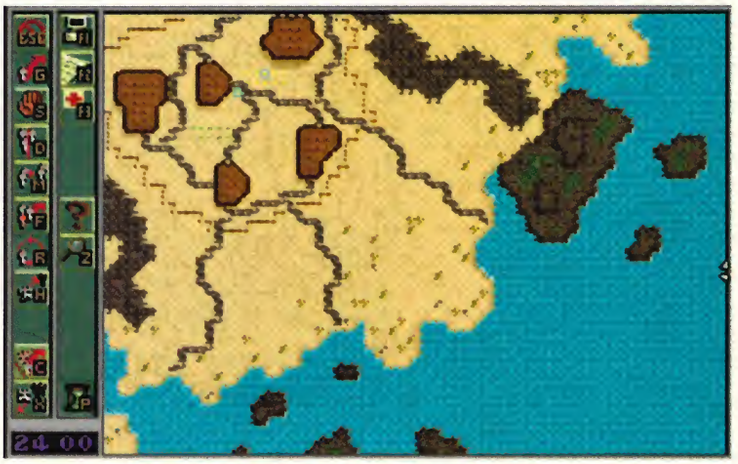
All missions begin with a brief description of the task ahead. Information here also includes the time available to complete the mission, the attitude of your paymasters, and (most important of all) the financial reward for success.

Ambush at Sorinor

With more than 200 missions, dozens of characters and a variety of landscape graphics, Ambush looks like any strategy player's dream — but is it really a triumph of quantity over quality?

Unless you're the kind of person who prefers consulting endless tables of statistics to watching a horde of orcs massacre your carefully-chosen mercenaries, you're likely to admire Mindcraft's game designs. Bold, colourful graphics, good music and sound effects, animated end-screens and icon controls, all help transform the traditional, 'nerdy' image of strategy games into something more exciting.

The general idea in Ambush is that throughout its history, the ancient land of Sorinor has been at war. Six fierce clans now fight each other for survival, all responsible for countless acts of violence, and none of them able to claim any moral high ground. The game offers you, a mercenary, a choice of over 200 scenarios from this continuing strife. Basically, you can either play the helpful guide steering travellers away from trouble, or the attacker responsible for annihilating anything that moves in your designated territory.



This landscape of sand and sea is just one of a multitude of terrain graphics in Ambush. Others include swamp land, forests, glaciers and mountains.

The six races all have different clan characteristics which are reflected in their attitude towards you and largely determine the kind of terrain featured in the missions. Some are belligerent, others greedy and intelligent — but all are willing to pay cash for success.

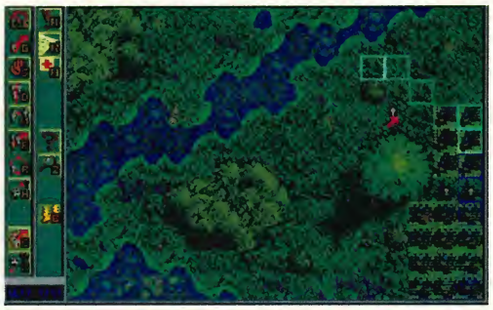
All of this, as well as a brief, cliché-ridden historical background, is explained in the accompanying documentation. The manual itself is just about competent. It provides plenty of detail on how to control the game, but it would have benefited from far more illustrations and a few screenshots, particularly for the icons.

Two games in one

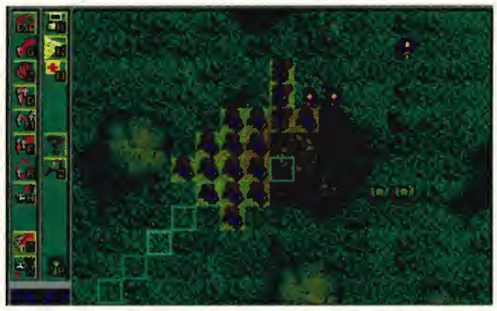
Generally, there are two types of game in Ambush, both of which can be saved. You can play individual missions, or you can create a campaign which links various missions together. Campaigns end when you run out of money, there are no more jobs left, or the clans are so annoyed with you that they steadfastly refuse to hire you ever again; individual missions end when you succeed or fail to complete the required task.

The entire game can be controlled with a mouse, switching between the map and the icon panel, but key-presses usefully

Two Minutes *of a lesson in strategy*



This task involves escorting at least 70% of a group of VIPs to the map's exit area. Your first job is to buy troops and give them orders, using icons. Luckily, the action is automatically paused until you decide to move.



Your group is two-thirds of the way to the exit and they are about to be ambushed. Zooming in on the action, you allow the wizards you bought earlier to do the fighting. If you purchased enough, the contest shouldn't be a problem.

Unfortunately, things don't always go to plan. This brief animation sequence, showing vultures taking their pick of the battlefield remains, provides a graphic reminder of your failure. A more in-depth mission report follows.

provide a shortcut and help to reduce the effort needed for tactical planning.

Your first task is usually to buy troops. There are well over a hundred different characters in the game (although only a handful are available in each scenario), including representatives of the six clans, traditional races such as humans, dwarves and elves, and a select sprinkling of grisly 'extra' creatures. These extras include giant spiders, spiked Bargs and a few other gruesome surprises.

There are two basic types of weapon available, hand-to-hand (such as swords and daggers) and missiles (such as bows and fireballs). If you're playing the ambusher, you can also place a range of gratifyingly nasty traps, which allow you to throw rocks, launch arrows and spears, create holes, shoot lighting bolts, launch fireballs, expel poison and release magic.

After buying troops for the scenario from the initially limited funds at your disposal, it's time to give them orders. These are icon or key-controlled, and include a histogram display (replaces characters with bar-charts), map zoom function, help (identifies areas of the map), place trap, buy troops, dismiss a group, go to a set destination, and so on.

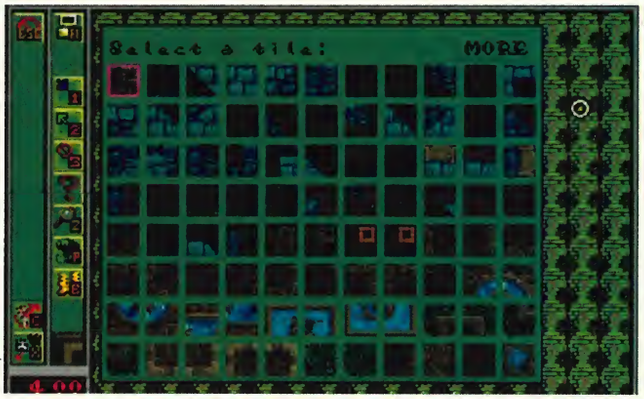
Once you've issued orders the level of involvement is up to you. If your commands and troop selections prove sound you'll have very little to do. If not, you'll be interfering every step of the way and you probably won't last long.

In particular, the variety of missions is very good. I tried a wide selection from each of the clan groups and didn't get bored with any, even after repeated plays. They range from fairly tame escort tasks to some very violent battles with bodies littering the screen. In fact, if it wasn't for the couple of bugs, I'd have enjoyed playing Ambush as much as I did Siege.

The sting in the tail is that the game crashed regularly at the 'end mission' animation sequence and whenever I declined a scenario. You can work around this to a limited extent if you know which mission you want to try, but the mark awarded reflects the fact that, ultimately, I found this disappointing and frustrating.

It's a shame, because without its crashes Ambush would be a more-than-competent, advanced strategy game with decent graphics and sound.

■ Gordon Houghton



The custom mission editor is a flexible tool which is hardly intuitive, but does let you construct complex missions from scratch, and save them to disk.

Six feuding clans vie for your services, and effectively decide the scenario landscape and rewards.

Techspec

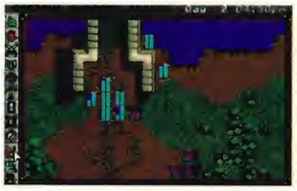
Three high density disks took half an hour to install on a 486 and three times that long on a 286. Mindcraft say you can use a 12MHz 286, but I suggest you start at 16MHz minimum.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	**7.5Mb**				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	**EGA**	✗	**Tandy**	✗
VGA	✓	**SVGA**	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	**Roland**	✗	**Sound Blaster**	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	**Keyboard**	✓	**Mouse**	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	**25MHz**				
Minimum memory	**640K**				
Free RAM required	**575K**				

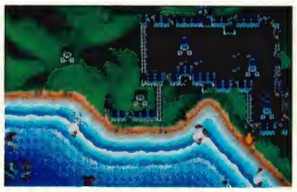
Verdict
A complex and fairly enjoyable game marred by a couple of annoying bugs

rating **5**

Alternatively...



Siege
Electronic Arts, £29.99
Rated 7, Issue 13
In many ways this is a predecessor to Ambush, with simpler command and control options and about a quarter of the number of missions. Your job is to command mythical and human forces to assault or defend a mediaeval castle. There are 24 scenarios spread between four castles, 54 different troop types, and a host of gadgets such as bridges, boiling oil, ladders and catapults to play with.



Rampart
Electronic Arts, £29.99
If you want more emphasis on arcade action, EA's conversion of Atari's classic battlefield game should fit the bill. Design and fortify a mediaeval stronghold and unleash an arsenal of cannons on your opponent's fortress. You can play in two-player mode (more fun) or challenge a computer-driven fleet of invading warships. Not the most complex or strategically demanding game in the world, but enjoyable.

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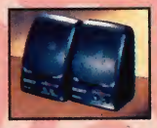

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Title	**The Patrician**
Publisher	**Daze Marketing**
Contact	**(071) 328 2762**
Price	**£34.99**

The Patrician

Not quite Wall Street, it's still a rich man's world in 15th century Germany

The Patrician is an historical trading game based on the Hanseatic League, a merchant confederation which dominated the Baltic and the North Sea in the Middle Ages.

Starting with one or two ships and a credit status with which, sadly, I can all too easily identify, the object is to build up a fleet fit to rule the waves and a great financial empire. Your aims are not merely monetary, however: once you've made your stash you must use it to obtain political power. This is achieved by running the full gamut of time-honoured tricks, from making high-profile donations to charity to outright shameless bribery. When you've attained the mayor's office in your home town it's time to make your pitch for the big one, Alderman of the Hanseatic League itself. The game is all about greed, ambition and the ruthless pursuit of power. Add a spot of cynical marriage-brokering, and it begins to sound like a mediaeval version of Dallas.

The reality is less colourful. In fact, the more I played The Patrician the more its title struck me as something of a misnomer. Although the aim is to become a merchant prince, the world in which you operate is solidly bourgeois. The excitement is all to do with profit margins; this is a game for closet book-keepers everywhere.

Whichever town you visit, from London in the west to Novgorod in the east, three more or less identical screens will be there to greet you. One is a shipyard, where new vessels can be ordered and old ones patched up; the second is the town square, where the political activity is conducted; the third is the waterfront, where business is regulated.

The buildings on the waterfront represent your warehouse, the armoury, the bank, the Guild Hall, the inn and your office, which is the key location. Click on this and you'll be taken inside. On the desk in the office are two books whose pages can be opened and turned by clicking on the appropriate spot. The small ledger has details of your ships, crews, etc; the large ledger is for conducting business transactions (you'll spend most of your time here). 18 items, from the mundane (corn, iron) to the exotic (furs, pep-

This is the political arena, the market square. The townsfolk operate an olde worlde Gallup poll service, informing you of your position in the social pecking order.

Fancy running a vast financial trading empire? You'll need patience, diligence and the ability to fathom the program's model. Apprentice megalomaniacs start here ...

Techspec

Not as demanding of your precious hard disk space as the current crop of strategy games, which has to be a good thing.

Disk requirements					
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Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	4Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	x	EGA	x	Tandy	x
VGA	✓	SVGA	x		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	x	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	x	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	16MHz				
Minimum memory	550K				
Free RAM required	640K				

Verdict
For hardened strategy buffs only

rating **6**

per), are listed with their sale and purchase prices, which vary according to location, and the law of supply and demand.

Let's say you begin at Lubeck, where ale is cheap. You click on the relevant line in the book to fill your ship with the amber nectar, then click on the map on the office wall and choose a destination, let's say Bergen. A moving scroll appears on screen, dating your voyage and informing you of significant outside events, after which you will find yourself at the Bergen waterfront. Pop into the office, open the book, sell the ale for a profit, buy some cheap fish and head off home. This, essentially, is what the game is about.

Unfortunately, although all this is quite absorbing, it's equally quite dull. Accumulating wealth is a slow grind; obviously there was no such thing as a Hanseatic get-rich-quick merchant. The clumsily written manual ensures you're left to find out everything for yourself. A little historical knowledge and some common sense helps — you're more likely to find cheap furs in the north and cheap wine in the south — but on the political side you've nothing to go on but guesswork. By the time I got sufficiently into the game to understand what was going on I was less than enthusiastic about going back to the beginning and starting again from scratch. It reminded me a little of playing A-Train. The game takes ages to get going and the remorseless attention to detail gives it a top-heavy feel.

No doubt in an effort to spice things up, the programmers have included an arcade sequence to represent pirate attacks on the fleet. Unfortunately, these scenes aren't very exciting, as is usually the case with arcade sequences in strategy games, and before long I switched to 'passive defence' mode and let the computer handle conflicts automatically.

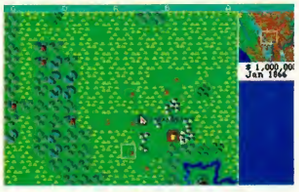
The Patrician is far from being a bad game, but it's also far from being the classic I'd been led to believe it might be. Since its release in Germany last year it's been a phenomenal bestseller, shifting some 60,000 copies and attracting rave notices. My own reactions fluctuated wildly: the initial impression was favourable, then I felt irritated, then I liked it more, then I didn't know what to think of it and then ... well, by then I felt like a disoriented yo-yo, so I gave it a rest. It kept me coming back, however, and there's no denying it's a game of subtlety and depth. That, on the other hand, might be part of the problem: I haven't had to take so many notes during a game since dungeon exploring in pre auto-map Britannia. What it needs is greater simplicity and, perhaps paradoxically, more variety.

There's certainly the makings of a fine game here, but as it stands it's definitely one for hardened strategy buffs only. It's got to be worth a look, though: 60,000 Germans can't be wrong.

■ Simon Shaw

Alternatively...

A-Train
Maxis/Ocean, £40.99
Rated 7, Issue 12
The aim of this game is to build up a financial empire around a railway network. As with The Patrician, it's based on a complex and in part unfathomable economic model (the workings of the stock market are particularly opaque), but it's entertaining and challenging, if over-meticulous. Despite its title, more likely to appeal to readers of the Financial Times than Train Spotters' Monthly.



Railroad Tycoon
MicroProse, £35.75
It would seem that the genre just can't get away from the railway theme. The great advantage of Sid Meier's classic is its playability. Less complex, less realistic than A-Train or The Patrician, but much more of a game than a business simulation and consequently much more fun. Aggressive computerised opposition gives it a real edge. Still the best business/empire-building game around.

This is the Guild Hall, where you can arrange auctions, or organise convoys to protect your ships from pirates. Enter impressive doors at the back in return for a fat introductory fee, but your prestige will shoot up.

Two Minutes *of wheeling and dealing*

Our ship is anchored at the Lubeck waterfront. To go into any of the buildings simply click on them. At this stage you'll be strapped for cash, so head for the bank to arrange a loan.

Our bank manager in person, with a sympathetic smile and the offer of an exorbitant interest rate. You can barter with him, but until you're established, you'll be seen as a major credit risk.

Loan in pocket, it's time for the office. Click on the quill on the desk to alter game settings, on the map to select a destination. Don't travel empty handed: open the big ledger to buy goods.

This is where the buying and selling takes place. Click on the commodity you want and make your purchase using the abacus. Now go to the inn to hire a crew and it's time to set sail.

Title	**International Open Golf Championship**
Publisher	**Ocean**
Contact	**(061) 832 6633**
Price	**£29.99**

Mark Twain once said of golf that it was "a good walk spoilt", but luckily there's no legwork involved in computer golf. Just line up that ball, wiggle a bit and swing.

Before you tee off, it's often a good idea to use a map overview of the hole. This helps you look out for sand traps, water, etc.

International Open Golf Championship

Is Ocean's latest golf sim going straight on to the green or is it just another shot into the bunker?

Ocean's International Open Golf Championship is the latest in a long line of PC golf simulations. With the likes of Links 386 Pro and PGA Golf Tour, digital versions of the sport have proved fun to play while achieving widespread acclaim and commercial success. It seems that never before have so many people wanted to spend their time hitting small white balls into tiny round holes with spindly metal sticks. But, with a couple of packages already having been described as 'the definitive golf sim', any pretender to the golf throne has a lot to live up to.

Enter Ocean's Golf. Like most other sims, it begins at the clubhouse where you can access the main option screen. Here you can save/load games, start new ones and watch a demo flyby of a selected course. Selecting the 'play' option gets you into sub-menus where you choose your course, player name, number of holes and one of three difficulty levels.

Apart from the practice session, Ocean's Golf allows you to choose and vary the competition rules you play. Strokeplay rules will be the most familiar with players competing over 18 holes, the score determined by the par for the course. In matchplay, players compete to win individual holes, not the course, while 'skins' is a variant of the matchplay rules where each hole is contested for cash, ie, $5000 a hole. The foursome option is a team game, where players alternate their shots, and lastly fourball has each player as an individual within a team.

After you've chosen your options and tinkered with your viewpoints, it's time to get straight down to the 3D screen, shout 'fore' and make a few divots.

The main game screen is enclosed within a frame that contains all menu options. All in-game functions are controlled from this screen including club selection, replays, camera viewpoints, grid toggles and so on. It's a comprehensive list but veteran PC golfers will find that there's nothing radically new or different here.

Despite your choice of course (of which there are three), when the 3D part of Ocean's golf appears it all seems to have a slightly bleak and windswept feel to it. Perhaps the reason for this is that Ocean has opted for polygonal graphics rather than the prettier digitised visuals seen in Jack Nicklaus Golf or Links. Although digitised pics are much more aesthetically pleasing, polygons do have their own distinct advantages. For example, the camera can track the ball using reverse angle, side views, spectator views and so on. In addition the view can be smoothly rotated and best of all the entire hole can be previewed with a flypast.

With its polygon-based graphics, Ocean's Golf may not look pretty, but its viewing system is more versatile. With side views, reverse views and flyby course views you'll never lose track of your ball.

Two Minutes *of fades, draws and hooking*

At the tee, select the full stroke icon, line up the ball in the crosshair and press fire. With luck your ball should soar into the air.

On the fairway and time to change club. Clicking on the menu option causes a bar to appear with your possible club options. Four iron, I think.

After 15 shots I've finally made it on to the green. Now, if I can just sink this short putt, I'll probably only be 12 over par.

Unlike previous golfing sims that used the power bar as an indicator of shot strength, Ocean's Golf has trimmed the swing interface down to four options; a quarter, a half, a three-quarter or a full swing. This is not such a bad idea and is much easier to get to grips with if you're a novice. But if you're a fan of the three stage backswing/power/connect method, you may find the system a bit limiting.

Another new feature is the clubhead sight. This control method is supposed to give realistic control over the ball while adding a random element to your shot playing. After you've chosen your shot, the clubhead crosshair appears and the random element is induced by the fluctuating movement of the ball as you try to position the sight over it. This 'wobble' effect becomes more exaggerated in difficult terrain or if the club you're using is unsuitable. The clubhead sight also allows you to play different shots.

When you finally get to the green, the putting control is the more familiar strength bar and, with putter in hand, you can switch on the helpful grid overlay to help you gauge the lie of the land. Now, stand with your feet slightly apart and nudge the ball towards the small round hole. After that, apart from the scoring, there's not much left to be simulated.

Unfortunately, this simulation has got it horribly, horribly wrong. I mean, I like golf; it's the only game where you can have hookers and right shankers without fear of getting arrested, but Ocean's effort seems to be a huge step backwards. Despite having more innovations than an inventor's shed, I can't really see anything to recommend about it. Links looks better, PGA Golf Tour is more fun and David Leadbetter's Golf has much more variety and attention to detail. While the four stroke icons allow you to retain some consistency in your approach play, the targetting of your golf ball in the crosshairs can get annoying and at times it's reminiscent of being the bombardier in a World War Two flight sim.

What really lets the game down is not the new interface but the graphics. The animation is very sub-standard and the game tends to shudder along horribly. For example, when my golfer teed off, the ball seemed to leave the ground two seconds after I'd actually hit it (and I was playing on a 40MHz 386 PC!). It's as if a chunk of animation frames got lost somewhere along the way. Soundwise, things are not much better, with no oohs and ahhs from the crowd, and the swing sounding like a hi-fi needle scraping a record.

Using the clubhead sight (left) you must position the blue crosshair over the inner golfball before you hit it. The small ball wobbles within the sight adding a random element to your shot playing.

The most important thing for a golf game to have is the right feel. Are you comfortable playing it? Does it make you want to play until your eyes hurt or reach for the reset button instead? Ocean's Golf looks dated and doesn't just miss the mark, it misses the green, the fairway and maybe even the entire course as well. My finger is already stretching out for that reset button as I write. If you want a good golf game shop around, there are much better golf games out there than this.

■ Dean Evans

Techspec

The comprehensive installation guide shows you how to make a boot disk and change your Autoexec.bat and Config.sys files. Golf may be incompatible with some disk compression systems. Call Ocean to check.

Disk requirements					
High density	✓				
Hard disk only	✓				
Space taken on hard disk	6Mb				
Graphic modes					
CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Hercules	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		
Soundboards					
Ad Lib	✓	Roland	✓	Sound Blaster	✓
Control					
Joystick	✗	Keyboard	✓	Mouse	✓
Performance					
Optimum speed	16MHz				
Minimum memory	640K				
Free RAM required	588K				

Verdict
Poorly animated, and not much fun

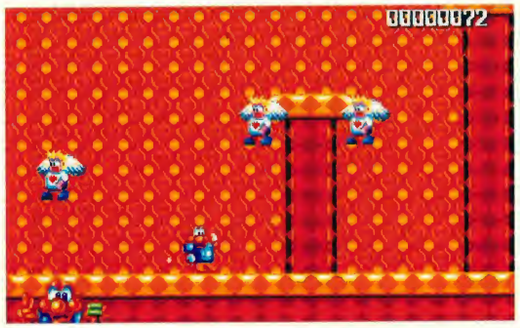
rating **4**

Alternatively...

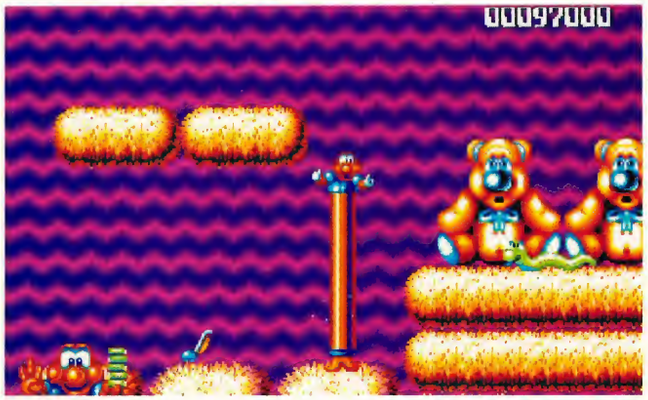
Links 386 Pro
US Gold, £45.99
With realistic Super VGA graphics and digitised courses, Links must be the most complete golfing simulation around. It currently has seven real-life courses to play and a wealth of changeable parameters from your golfing stance right down to the colour of your plus-fours. Enhanced and updated from the orginal, Links is fun and visually stunning.

Jack Nicklaus Golf & Course Design Signature Edition
Accolade, £39.99
Rated 6, Issue 9
A good all-rounder with a swing/control system that's versatile and simple. Putting is the game's weakest point, though, and it has to be said that Jack doesn't offer much that can't be found in other golf games. It does, however, have the best, most spectacular course designer around.

Title	**James Pond 2: RoboCod**
Publisher	**Millennium**
Contact	**(0223) 421526**
Price	**£30.99**



James Pond 2 RoboCod



Stuck down a hole? No problem. The expandosuit allows RoboCod to reach up to those high ledges.

After its astounding success on the Amiga and the Sega Megadrive, the second outing for the heroic RoboCod James Pond has now reached your humble PC screen.

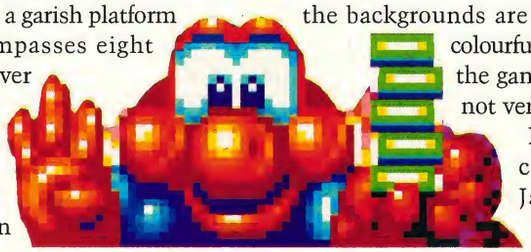
Once again mankind, animal kind and assorted household objects are threatened with total global domination. In a slimy effort to sabotage the world's largest toy manufacturer, the sinister Dr Maybe has planted penguin-bombs in toy factories inside the North Pole! Controlling James Pond, your task is simply to collect all of these dynamite laden penguins before they destroy the factory and ruin Christmas all over the world.

With enhanced graphics and some new levels, RoboCod is a garish platform romp that encompasses eight huge levels with over 2,500 screens of gameplay. The hero is able to run, jump, duck, hang, and even stretch. Stretching (achieved with the use of the expandosuit) is by far RoboCod's most unusual feature enabling him to reach high ledges and reach new areas.

Of course, the journey in these 'save the world' type scenarios is never going to be a breeze and RoboCod has to negotiate not only the platforms but holes, spikes and a huge variety of meanies. As he has no weapon to hand, RoboCod can only kill them by landing on top of them à la Sonic and Zool. If RoboCod is touched by a meanie then he loses a battery for his expandosuit and when all these batteries have gone a life is lost.

The game is divided into a number of factory rooms, and each factory must be completed before moving onto the next. On each level RoboCod must collect all the penguins before being allowed to leave by the flashing barber pole exit. Bonus blocks contain surprises such as a car, a plane and a set of wings, while there are extra lives to be collected and sets of bullet-proof armour to be found. Picking up yellow stars powers up the expandosuit and gives you another battery, thereby extending your current life.

RoboCod is a good platform game with a cartoon-like style that gives the impression that it is aimed at the younger player. The only real criticisms I have are that the backgrounds are not so much colourful as sickly, and the gameplay itself is not very taxing.



However, this conversion of James Pond 2 has made a timely appearance. Recently, Zool proved that there is obviously a market for platform games for the PC and that there are a lot of PC gamers about who aren't interested only in flight sims, etc. Whatever your opinion about the genre, it's nice that PC owners have a choice at last, because after all, it's not just kids who play platform games ...

■ Dean Evans

Techspec *James Pond 2: RoboCod makes very few demands on the average PC system. If you've got a fast machine or a slow one the frame rate can be changed and all in all RoboCod shouldn't cause any problems for anyone.*

Disk requirements

High density	✓
Hard disk only	✗
Space taken on hard disk	1.5Mb

Graphic modes

CGA	✗	EGA	✗	Tandy	✗
VGA	✓	SVGA	✗		

Soundboards

Ad Lib ✓	Roland ✗	Sound Blaster ✓

Control

Joystick ✓	Keyboard ✓	Mouse ✗

Performance

Optimum speed	16MHz
Minimum memory	640K
Free RAM required	570K

Verdict
Fun, long term platform action and a good addition to the genre

rating **6**

there's only one good enough to be called...

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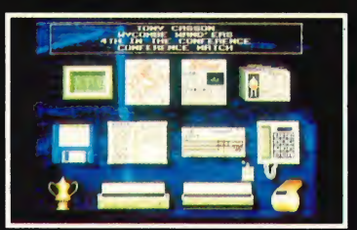
"The answer to a dedicated football fans prayers" (Amiga Format)

"A contender for the best soccer management game on the Amiga" (Amiga Power)

"Convincingly boots other football management games into touch" **(Amiga Action 90%)**

The most comprehensive and sophisticated football strategy game ever.



Screen shots from Amiga Format.

Available from your local stockist or direct from Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd.

Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd., Carver House, 2-4 Carver Street, Sheffield S1 4FS. © 1992 Gremlin Graphics Software Ltd. Tel: (0742) 753423.

Reviews extra

The games that got away

We'd like to be able to review every game in depth, but with this month's bumper crop of releases we just couldn't find the space. Reviews Extra aims to cover the games that missed out on the big time.

If you're looking for some budget software, a mission or add-on disk for a game then chances are you might find it here in these pages.

This month offers up a very mixed bag of software that ranges from games compilation packs to CD-ROM software.

The Immortal (£12.99)
Hit Squad: (061) 832 6633

The Immortal is a 3D isometric puzzle game that has a similar look to Shadowlands. Way ahead of its time when it was first released, The Immortal challenges the player to seek out the old wizard, Mordamir in a labyrinth below an ancient city.

Why should I do this, you may ask? What's my motivation? Well it seems that Mordamir was once your mentor while you wandered down the path of magic and the dual carriageway of cunning. He taught you all you know and though he disappeared many years ago, you have a feeling he may still be alive.

The Immortal is a welcome addition to the Hit Squad stable and for my money, well worth it's pitifully small asking price.

Crazy Cars 3 (£29.99)
Titus Software (071) 700 2119

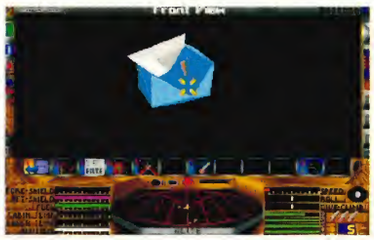
From swords and sorcery we now turn to the thrill of fast cars and the open road with Crazy Cars 3, a 3D driving game.

At the wheel of your Lamborghini Diablo, you must put your driving skills to the test over 60 different routes. Weave through the traffic, beat off the competition, run your opponents off the road, dodge roadworks and avoid the evert present traffic cops. This is Saturday Night racing at its toughest.

If you were a fan of Chase HQ or Outrun at the arcades then this might bring back some old memories. If not I'd stick with F1GP as, though the action may be fast, it's all looking a touch dated.

Space Legends (£34.99)
Empire (081) 343 7337

On the other hand, one game that has certainly aged well is David Braben's classic space trading game Elite Plus. Elite is just one of three games which have been packaged together in the Space Legends compilation from Empire which also includes the groundbreaking Wing Commander and the role-playing



challenge of Megatraveller 1: The Zhodani Conspiracy.

Elite should need little or no introduction. With a sparsely equipped Cobra spaceship you must build up your status from harmless to the excellence of being elite. This is achieved through trading goods between planets, piracy, bounty hunting, etc. Elite is huge and you can go about making your fortune any way you choose.

Wing Commander puts you on board the spaceship Tigers Claw as a pilot fighting the evil might of the Kilrathi empire. Offering some of the most intense starship action, Wing Commander will appeal to those who like to hang out in deep space blasting people. Its selling point was its superbly detailed bitmapped graphics that still look good today.

A good deal slower and quieter is Megatraveller, based on the role-playing game of the same name. Lead a tiny band of adventurers across the galaxy, landing on planets, fighting battles and forging friendships that have never been forged before. If you are prepared to sit down for a while and learn the system, Megatraveller will give you the chance to rest that battered joystick and tired old trigger finger.

The Animation Classics Pack (£44.99)
Empire (081) 343 7337

While we're on the subject of games compilations, it would seem a good time to mention The Animation Classics Pack from ReadySoft.

This pack brings together two Don Bluth games and a ReadySoft original, games that were sold on the basis of their looks, rather than their actual gameplay as such.

As a result, though these games may appear to look a million dollars, deep down they're actually more along the lines of $1.50!

Two of these games, Space Ace and Dragon's Lair II, may be familiar to you from the arcades. Originally appearing on the ill-fated

laser disk system, both games featured superb animation and huge characters, but entailed little more than just completing a set of moves at certain points of the game to progress further. It's all a bit limiting and the only real differences between the two games are those of style and plot.

The third game, Wrath of the Demon is a hack-and-slay quest to rescue the princess (isn't that always the case?) and rid the kingdom of the evil Demon. It's all pretty standard fare and slightly better than the other two games. But not much.

The Chessmaster 3000
CD-ROM (£49.99)
Mindscape (0444) 246333

Moving swiftly along, we depart the realms of fantasy to the thrilling world of chess. If you're a chess purist and want to avoid the gimick led games that have been around of late, then Chessmaster 3000 will test your skills to the limit. There are a wealth of options including a very impressive interpretation of your current position and prospects.

The CD-ROM version features Grand Master Anatoly Karpov as an opponent and though the engine doesn't play as strong a game as the dedicated chess programs, it's the best compromise between looks, features and performance.

1993 Guinness Multimedia Disc of Records
CD-ROM (£TBA)
Mindscape (0444) 246333

Norris McWhirter's pride and joy has at last made it to your monitor screen. Now you can relive fantastic feats and exploits from around the globe, exploring the the greattest list of accomplishments, failures and flops ever assembled.

Using on-screen icons, you have access to full motion video sequences, photos and illustrations as well as instant data retrieval and and cross referencing capabilities.

Perfect for teachers, researchers and the odd trivia buff, the Guinness Disc of Records is more informative and fun than its book-based original and a good example of the capabilities of CD-ROM.

World Atlas CD-Rom (£99.99)
Mindscape (0444) 246333

Yet another CD release from Mindscape allows you to view the planet as never before. Including up to date detailed maps, the World Atlas features current facts and stats and comparison charts and graphs.

Not content to be just a multimedia Atlas, this CD allows you to add your own maps and data (should international boundaries change again), create slide presentations and even print giant wall maps.

Harpoon Designers Series II
(£39.99) Add-on disk
Electronic Arts (0753) 549442

In response to the success of the original program, the Designers' Series allows the budding naval tactician to battle in 12 all-new scenarios for each Harpoon battleset.

Also included is the comprehensive Harpoon Data Annex. If you want to know how sensitive the AN/BQQ-5 SONAR on the Los Angeles (SNN-688) class sub is then this will tell you. If you don't and just want some tactical hints then the definitive Harpoon tactical guide has been included for you to read between engagements.

Carriers At War Construction Kit
(£24.99) Add-on disk
Electronic Arts (0753) 549442

Including three brand new scenarios to get to grips with, the Carriers At War Construction Kit offers a flexible tool for creating your own pacific carrier battles.

Build ships and planes, organize them into squadrons and task groups, draft a map and even customise the artificial intelligence of the program. Great stuff.

Reviewed this issue

Tornado	9
Sensible Soccer	9
Flashback	8
Beauty and the Beast	8
Premier Manager	7
Blue Force	7
Ishar 2: Messengers of Doom	6
The Patrician	6
Robocod	6
Rags to Riches	5
Betrayal at Krondor	5
Ambush	5
Ocean's Golf	4

PC*review*'s best buys

What are the best games currently available? PC Review's Best Buys are taken from the last three months of reviews in order to give you a good idea of what to shell out for.

Syndicate
Bullfrog/Electronic Arts, £44.99
A successful combination of action and strategy in which you head a huge corporation bent on world domination. Set in the near future, it is extremely atmospheric, absorbing and fun to boot.

Strike Commander
Origin, £49,99
More of a flight game than a flight sim, SC combines mercenary dogfighting and the thrill of fast jets. Great fun, but unless you have a monster machine, you'll stay stuck on the runway.

The 7th Guest
Virgin, £69.99
A visually stunning CD interactive drama, using video footage, SVGA graphics and sampled speech. A must for CD owners, it's the first game to make proper use of CD-ROM.

X-Wing
LucasArts/US Gold, £45.99
The official Star Wars game combines the challenge of a good flight simulator with the excitement of a shoot 'em up. It looks great, it's fun and it will keep you entertained for weeks, if not months.

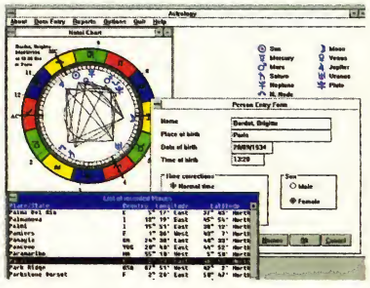
Shareware reviews

Sam Mackenzie reaches for the stars this issue, finds virtual reality in a labyrinth, and takes a look at a virus checker and an unusual word processing package

Astro World

This is an astrology program that runs under Windows and produces horoscopes with graphical and text reports. A horoscope is a map of the position of the planets in the heavens at the exact time and place of your birth. This map is represented by a circle showing the path the sun appears to follow through the sky. Astrologers divide the 360° of this path into 12 30° sectors, the 12 signs of the Zodiac, and believe your entire personality is governed by the interaction of the sun and the planets at the exact time of your birth.

Astro World was written by a Swiss programmer, aided by a German astrologer, and is available in an English version as well as in German (the original) and French (planned for May 1993). It appeals to two kinds of users: the professional astrologer and the more general user. Those who have studied astrology will find it handy for the quite difficult calculations needed for a natal chart. The rest of us can use the program to produce complete horoscopes. The program's help file has a chapter, Astrology for non-astrologers, to explain jargon.



Supplier:	*Springsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*Astro-World*
Price:	*£1.99*
Registration price:	*£35*
Registration package:	*opportunity to upgrade to Version 2*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, keyboard, PC running Windows*
Disk space:	*1.8Mb*

Product
Astro-World

shareware tech spec 1993

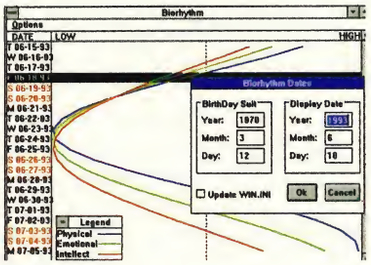
Given the date, time and place of birth, Astro World produces the subject's natal chart. You can also view data tables which list the angles of all planet positions, house positions and aspects. The data used for calculations are based on options that the user can set to determine the detail provided. The printed report includes not only the chart and tables but also a complete interpretation and can run to 30 A4 pages if all the options are required.

The program operates by using two databases to which you can add information: one with details of names and times of birth which in turn relies on one of places which is supplied with the data of about 1,680 cities all over the world, and one which is not user-customisable containing the text that is produced for each of the possible results in the natal chart. The latter requires a great deal of disk space, but it does show there is nothing new or unique in anybody's horoscope.

Biorhythms

Biorhythms is another method of predicting what you are going to feel like and how you are likely to perform on any given day and again your personal forecast is calculated on the basis of your time of birth. It is a simple theory based on the idea that there are three regular cycles governing the physical, emotional and intellectual aspects of our lives. The pattern of the three cycles is fixed and the same for all of us but their effects allow us to remain individual owing to the facts that the three phases are of varying duration and the interaction of the three produces different moods.

The Windows implementation shown here is included on a games disk that also has a version of Arachnid, Roulette, Blackout and some other diversions. It is a very sparse version: some others allow you to customise its operation and even modify the curves by including feedback from your own experiences. All this program does is to allow you to enter two dates – the



date of birth of the subject and the date you want to view – and it then shows the appropriate three cycles for the period around the specific date you are interested in.

The idea that we experience highs and lows and progressions in between seems to fit in with our expectations of life and the chart produced lets you see how you should be feeling on any date.

My curve shown here indicates I should be experiencing declining powers in all three areas and by the middle of next week I will be feeling low and performing pretty badly. The next time all three curves coincide on a high is going to be in September next year – so I'll just have to put up with my less than optimised self until then.

Supplier:	*Softcell Services Shareware*
Tel:	*(0443) 238630*
Product code:	*Wingames 6*
Price:	*£3 (3.5") £2.50 (5.25")*
Registration price:	*N/A*
Registration package:	*N/A*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, keyboard, any PC running Windows*
Disk space:	*30K*

Product
Biorhythms

shareware tech spec 1993

Easy Word

Supplier:	*Sprigsoft*
Tel:	*(0352) 770049*
Product code:	*EZ word*
Price:	*£1.99*
Registration price:	*£20*
Registration package:	*N/A*
Minimum specification:	*all video modes, keyboard, 286 or better*
Disk space:	*1.24 Mb*

Product
Easy Word

shareware tech spec 1993

This DOS word processor is quite simple to use and produces acceptable results. It lacks graphics (apart from simple line drawing) and other frills that word processors are expected to have these days – even in the DOS environment – but as long as you are happy to work within its constraints, it offers the facilities to make the routine job of producing letters and other short documents very easy.

The main principle behind this particular software is that it addresses basic requirements and dispenses with extras. It only prints to two standard paper sizes, A4 and American letter, and it uses your printers fonts rather than having any of its own to offer. It only has a few printer drivers, two models of Panasonic, an Epson LQ and the HP DeskJet and LaserJet 3 plus four generic drivers, IBM standard and Epson 9-pin, 24-pin and LQ.

In addition to fundamentals of text effects and alignment, it includes a spelling checker and a word count facility. Fast is not a term you would use to describe this program and this is perhaps its main drawback. It recognises this limitation in that it won't even install on anything less than a 286, but even on a full 386 operations like loading a document and moving around it are slow.

Its own manual has 26 pages and while working on that as a test document I saw the message 'Please wait' rather a lot. But if you only require a word processor for small tasks then its lack of speed won't be a problem.

A word processor needs to include easy to use methods of copying, moving and deleting text. Easy Word has two text manipulation facilities. The first, Rectangular Block, is a mark and drag system and moves or copies text exactly as it is formatted including any effect or change of typeface markers vertically, horizontally or from one document to another.

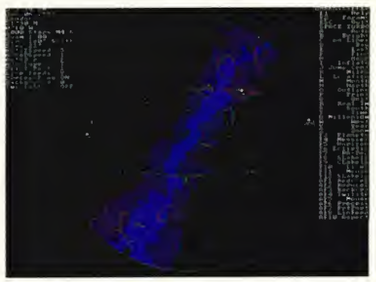
The other, Length of Text, is a cut and paste system and will cut or copy text from any position to a clipboard which can be automatically retyped at any other position or in another document by positioning the cursor at the required starting point and pressing the insert key while holding down the shift key. Such retyping can be repeated as often as required.

Also on the plus side, Easy Word renders utilising tabs particularly easy *and* it also offers facilities for tables with lines drawn around cells. It also enables you to automate tasks using macros.

On the whole I did find this word processor easy to use. I also liked its informal approach as in the message "Duff path or file name" when I failed to supply an intelligible location for an exported ASCII file.

Even so, at a time when software is being increasingly standardised Easy Word is an idiosyncratic product. It doesn't try to use the conventions of other word processors, let alone conforming to CUA standards. It uses function keys and the association between keys and commands is its own, a drawback if you move to another word processor as keypress commands tend to become ingrained.

Skyglobe



This is a terrific program even if you are not exactly a bona fide dedicated astronomer. To the uninitiated as well as to the well-informed stargazer, it is of enormous interest and entertainment value. What Skyglobe does is to provide you with a view of the sky from any position and any time which you choose.

The graphics used are very impressive indeed when viewed on a VGA screen. You are able to see stars down to magnitude 7, but you can also set the limit on how bright the displayed stars ought to be.

You can zoom in and out at will if you like, set your viewing direction and location and, of course, the date and time. Once you have decided on a particular view of the sky you can move time on by a minute, hour, day, month or millennium!

If you press A then the whole sky moves as time ticks by in five minute steps. You can watch the planets, the sun and the moon, including its phase.

Furthermore, lines can be added to demonstrate constellations and you have the facility of displaying specific star and constellation names.

There is even a finder for constellations which you might have lost and you can illustrate galaxies which can be found in the Messier catalogue. If you happen to be using a mouse then names and positions will appear automatically as the mouse moves over certain stars.

I could go on adding to the description of the individual features ad infinitum – but, as this suggests, there are rather a lot of them!

I suppose what might be somewhat more important is to describe what you could utilise Skyglobe for. I don't really think it needs much more justification than to say that it kept, and still keeps, me amused for hours on end.

When I remember, I use it to see where the planets and major constellations are during the evening. You can print out views so you don't need a Planisphere any more – although I haven't found a way of making the printouts luminous!

But Skyglobe isn't just a replacement Planisphere it is also a replacement planetarium. You can watch the night sky change from day to day, month to month and millennium to millennium.

You can appreciate just how the rotations of the earth affect the view of the fixed stars and watch the motion of the planets. You can also advance time by one sidereal day in order to provide a background of fixed stars against which you can see the track of the planets.

In fact, you can learn more about observational astronomy in a few hours playing with Skyglobe than in years of actual observation of the planets and stars themselves, although nothing can replace the awesome thrill of actually going out and gazing at the winter night sky in all its celestial majesty.

In the light of this, no school should be without such a user-friendly, engaging and fascinating learning tool. If you are even slightly interested in astronomy you should get a copy of Skyglobe for hours of good, clean fun!

Supplier:	*PDSL*
Tel:	*(0892) 663298*
Product code:	*3339*
Price:	*£4.65 (1 disk)*
Registration Price:	*¢20*
Registration package:	*customised for your location, manual updates*
Minimum Specification:	*all video modes supported, keyboard, mouse, any PC with 440K free memory*
Disk space:	*300K*

Product
Skyglobe 3.1

shareware tech spec 1993

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Ken's Labyrinth

If you've played Wolfenstein and enjoyed it, then Ken's Labyrinth is a must. The basic idea is the same as Wolfenstein: you are in a 3D virtual reality style maze which you can 'walk' through opening doors and shooting at various enemy.

You can control the game via keyboard , joystick or games pad — personally I found that I preferred using the keyboard. With a little bit of practice you are able to run as well as walk, raise or lower your eyeline to see over or under things and fire while running sideways.

The quality of the animation is very good indeed (very smooth on my 386DX-25) and there are lots of nice touches like when you eat a tray of food it is replaced by a tray of empty plates and glasses. The music and sound effects are good but the background tune isn't quite as compelling as in Wolfenstein.

Ken's Labyrinth consists of three episodes, The Search for Sparky, Sparky's Revenge and Find the Way Home, and you can play each of them at one of two levels. There is a story line about getting the enemy chief, Ken, aliens who kidnap specimens, rescuing your dog Sparky and more nonsense, but it doesn't matter; you simply have to get on with fighting, getting weapons, ammo, first aid kits, money, gems, etc.

The real difference between this and Wolfenstein is that there is more variety of enemies, of weapons, of useful objects that you need to solve the puzzles, etc. There's even a slot machine that you can play to gain coins that can then be used in the soda machine! Some players may not like the way that the attempted realism of Wolfenstein has been dropped as you no longer fire realistic guns and ammo at people, but fire red jelly and fireballs at an assortment of zombies and ghosts.

You could feasibly say that Wolfenstein was the first generation of 3D arcade maze games and Ken's Labyrinth is the next step. I wonder what comes after that?

Supplier:	*Precision Software Publishing*
Tel:	*(0223) 208288*
Product code:	*Ken's Lab*
Price:	*£3*
Registration price:	*£20 plus VAT and postage*
Registration package:	*another two levels*
Minimum specification:	*VGA, Sound Blaster or Ad Lib card, mouse, joystick or Gravis Gamepad, at 386/486 recommended)*
Disk space:	*1Mb*

Product
Ken's Labyrinth

Integrity Master

If you are looking for a virus checker that includes the ability to detect file alterations, no matter what caused them then you should take a good look at Integrity Master.

The package comes equipped with a built-in virus scanner which will search carefully for the signatures of a lengthy list of known viruses in all of the files on any disk. If it finds an unwanted intruder, the program will then let you know its name and inform you also how to deal effectively with it – usually by the obvious means of deleting the infected files and reinstalling them.

To protect your disks against unknown new viruses, Integrity Master will create a separate file of check sum information. If any of the files should change in the time between scans, then you will be told about it immediately.

Of course, the files modification *may* be completely legitimate, but at the same time if you have no knowledge whatsoever of the process making the change, then you might well have a virus at work.

Other even more common explanations are that, rather than a virus, you have a hard disk drive that is about to fail. The point is that no matter what, or how serious, the precise cause of the unintended change it will be detected.

As well as looking after the files, it also has facilities to scan and make back-ups of the partition and boot sector of your hard disk. Should these fail for some reason, they can be easily restored.

The program is incredibly easy to install and use. There is a lot of documentation provided with the package and you will learn a great deal about running your machine as securely as possible if you read it. If you cannot be bothered to wade through it (and we've all been guilty of this tendency) then you should still be able to make use of it via the menus and help screens with no problems at all.

If you do decide to register, you will get an up-to-date version with additional known viruses. There is also a very useful three year virus support service and you are encouraged to report any unknown viruses the product manages to detect.

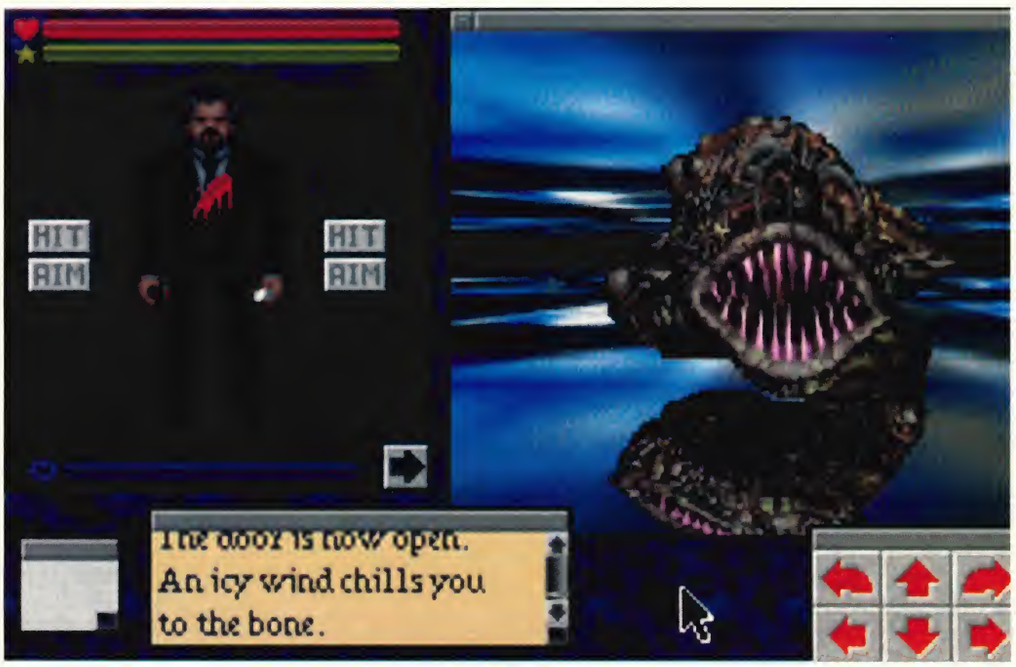
Supplier:	*Precision Software Publishing*
Tel:	*(0223) 208288*
Product code:	*UT165*
Price:	*£3*
Registration price:	*£29*
Registration package:	*latest version, book on viruses and updates covering new viruses*
Minimum specification:	*all video modes supported, any PC*
Disk space:	*550K*

Product
Integrity Master

QED

The Legacy

MicroProse's creepy adventure is more chilling than your average fridge, more stomach-churning than a ride on a big dipper and contains more horrors than the local infants' school. Staying alive is far from easy, especially when every creature seems determined to put you six feet under. If the phantoms prove frustrating and you keep coming unstuck, read part one of our definitive guide to ghoul-bashing and you'll come up trumps



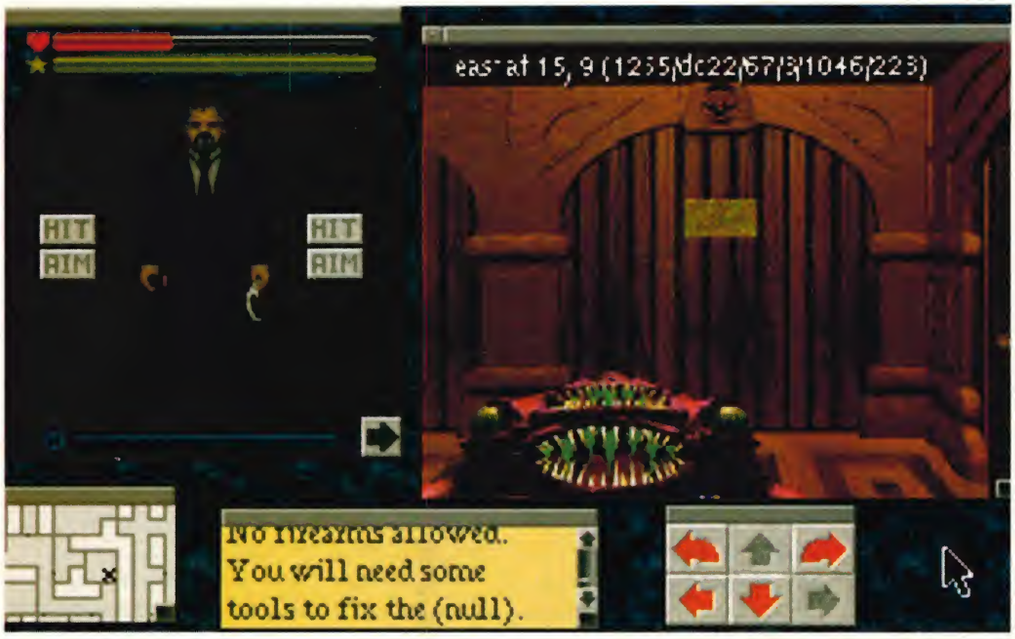
General problems

The Legacy allows you to choose one of eight predefined characters, each with their own skills and attributes. Consequently, most of the puzzles can be solved in various different ways, depending on the abilities of the character you have chosen.

Some characters are better at casting spells, whilst others are more practically minded and can make good use of implements such as tool kits. How you play the game is up to you, but here are a few hints to get you going, whatever your forte.

In a haunted house, even the simplest task might prove nightmarishly difficult. Take opening doors, for example. Turning a handle is not always enough, so if the door you want to get through remains stubbornly shut, there are any number of different methods which you can employ to get it open.

When a door is locked, the obvious thing to do would be to find the right key. However, this may not be either practical or possible. One alternative is to pick the lock, using a mechanical or electrical tool kit plus the relevant skill. A second option would be to force



the door, but this will only be really effective if you are playing a strong character who possesses the necessary force skill. Alternatively, you could open a door by magical means, providing that you have acquired the Key of the Shadow Lord spell.

Another daunting problem facing anyone foolish enough to explore a haunted house is that it can naturally get pretty darned scary in there. Being paralysed with fear is not the best thing that could happen when you're set upon by a ravening beast, so how do you stop your knees from knocking?

If you can find either the shades or demon mask, wearing them can do wonders for your bravado: what you can't see you don't worry about. On the other hand, skills can be developed throughout the game and increasing stamina or willpower boosts your resistance to fright. The same effect can also be gained by casting the 'arcane tower of reason' spell.

Increasing the number of your health and magic points works in a somewhat similar manner. Having a good supply of health points is absolutely vital when you're up against some of the tougher monsters and these can be gained by improving your stamina or strength as much as possible.

If the worst comes to the worst and you're running low on health points, try resting up in a safe area. These areas are indicated by triangle symbols, which the monsters tend to avoid.

If spell casting is more your kind of thing, you'll want to stock up on magic points. This can be achieved by increasing stamina or willpower.

Zombies and red runes on the ground and first floors

Characterised by wood panelled walls and more zombies than your brain can possibly handle, this section presents a number of intriguing problems, some of which can't be solved until later in the game. If a problem is proving impossible to solve, don't worry. It may be that you will need to return to it later in the game, perhaps because it requires a spell or item which is located in a part of the house you haven't explored yet. The main thing is to be patient, and everything should fall into place eventually.

One thing in this section which may have you stumped is the significance of the warlock painting. Firstly, examine the painting closely and its meaning will become apparent. You will need to find a green gem to insert into the pendant, and this is located in one of the bedrooms on the second floor.

You should also come across a glass case containing a demonic statue. This can be broken open so that you can get at the artifact in question. Use either a heavy object such as the metal vase or poker, or shoot the glass out using a gun.

Some of the doors on this level are nailed shut, but don't waste your efforts trying to prise out the nails because the doors can never be opened. Don't worry. There are alternative routes which lead to the rooms behind the doors, and you should come across these later on. The important thing is to find another way of getting upstairs.

If you've watched any amount of old horror films, you will already know that in spooky mansions the lights have a nasty habit of going out. When this does happen to you, the best thing to do would be to fix the fuse box, using the electrical tool kit which is located in the basement.

Anyone playing a character who finds fuses confusing might be better off using a good, old fashioned torch, and there is one located on the eastern side of the first floor. Those who prefer magical solutions to their problems can cast the 'sight of the dark walker' spell to help them see in the dark.

You might find some red runes, as well as a rune stone, which will come in handy later in the game. To use them, you will need to cast the 'dimensional rift' spell on them. This spell is found in the asylum.

Another thing you should find in this section is the wall safe. This contains something which you will want to view closely. The key to the safe is in the bottom half of the first floor. It is hidden behind an illusory wall, but keep an eye out for zombies on the way there.

One obviously important thing to remember is that you should always try and keep your head. Since two heads are better than one, finding an extra could be a good move. Keep your eyes peeled and you should discover a severed head somewhere on this level. To pick up the head, drag it into your inventory. It becomes extremely useful once you get into the caves.

Coffin dust and holy water will also come into their own later on. The coffin dust is used in the mausoleum, where it can be sprinkled on the bones left behind by a dead skeleton to prevent it from coming back to life.

The holy water is most useful on the second floor and in the basement. It can either be thrown at daemons and ghosts to destroy them, or else drunk to cure you should you get poisoned.

You might just get something of a sinking feeling if you should stumble across the trap doors by accident. To close them again, press the buttons which are located by one of the doors.

The chain room is one of the trickier parts of the game, and you will need to check your map to avoid confusion. Timing is everything when it comes to crossing the room because getting hit by a chain can prove a painful experience. Once you have crossed the room you will be teleported to the temple. Use the backwards movement arrow to leave the room.

Take note, the monsters on this level do not have to be fought, and using the the juju fetish will enable you to ignore the zombies completely. You won't gain anything from attacking the green tentacled lurker, so avoid it like the plague.

Bloodstains and red herrings on the second floor

More wooden panels, and there are some numbered doors to boot. To tackle these, follow the sequence and start again if you have to turn back for any reason or simply walk through the wrong door. You must go through each door in numerical order, starting with door 1. Try to concentrate and don't rush it.

The skull corridor is another poser, and can be especially confusing at the best of times. Progress often requires a bit of back-tracking, which is worth remembering in this particular instance. To travel down the corridor you actually have to press the backwards arrow in order to move forwards.

No haunted house would be complete without secret doors, and where better to put one than in a fireplace? The problem is, of course, how do you get it to open? All you need to know here is that you'll just have to push your luck to get anywhere. Examine the fireplace, and then press the centre section. Open sesame!

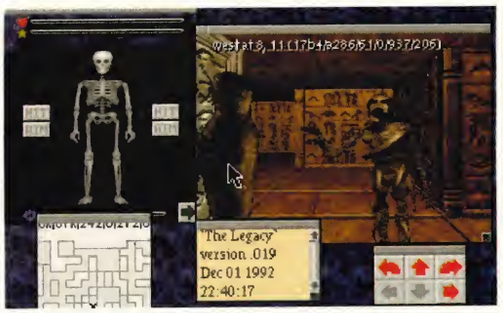
It's not exactly easy to relax in a dark creepy mansion which is packed to the gills with ghosts, ghouls and other assorted nasties. That, however, is just what you're going to do. When you enter the TV room, you'll find – surprise, surprise – a TV and video recorder. If you've already opened the safe on the first floor, you should have found a video tape. Now put it in the video, get out the popcorn and settle down for a fun night's viewing.

If that hasn't put you off your dinner, then the bloodstains should be a doddle. Take care not to put your foot in it – after all, it could make a bit of a mess of your trousers. The best way to get around the problem is to press the switch on the wall, and you should be teleported past them.

The Cult of Melchoir painting is a nasty piece of work, and you need to find a means of destroying it. Talking to a ghost (if you can stop your teeth chattering long enough to get the words out) will provide a clue. Find matches in the corridor near the stairs up to the first floor. I think you can guess what to do with them.

The daemonic statues in the bedroom will also cause you some grief, so give them a wide berth. These are not the statues you are looking for, so leave well alone.

The monsters on the second floor are a bit more problematic than their milder mannered chums downstairs, and simply trying to avoid them is not going to get you anywhere.



Ghosts, apart from being downright scary, can cause you a bit of a headache. Avoid them whenever possible, although you may have to converse with one to discover the meaning of the Melchoir painting. When running away is just not possible, you can always polish them off with a bit of magic or a light sprinking of holy water. Once you have destroyed the Cult of Melchoir painting, they will trouble you no more.

The wandering woman is a bit of a red herring to say the least. She's not important to the plot, so whatever you do, don't follow her. Ignore her totally and all will be fine and dandy.

Daemons are another matter. These are large and fierce, so if you come across one of these, run away! If you are unfortunate enough to be cornered by one of the brutes, try to dodge their spells and, if the opportunity arises, use the holy water to destroy them.

This concludes our starter guide to the Legacy. Hopefully, you should now be well on your way to solving the mystery of Winthrop House.

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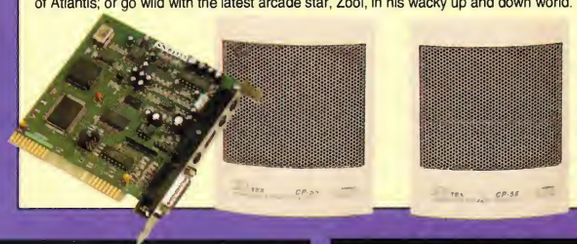

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Ultima VII

Part two: The Serpent Isle

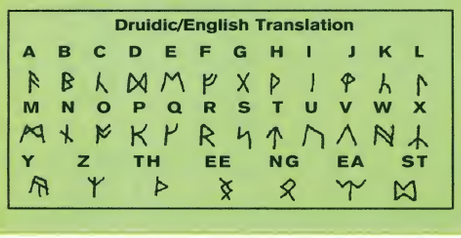
The latest instalment of the Ultima saga from Origin is a 'sequel' to Ultima VII – The Black Gate, set on location in the Serpent Isle of the title. Veteran gamer Robin Matthews brings you this starter guide to the game

Ultima VII: Part Two – The Serpent Isle is a far better product than Part One – The Black Gate, and it has fewer bugs! The story is set some 18 months after the destruction of the Black Gate, and picks up the trail of the despicable Batlin and your friend Iolo's wife, the bewitched Gwenno. A scroll discovered in Batlin's personal possessions suggests that they have travelled 'through the pillars to the Serpent Isle.' Naturally, that's where you and the best in Britannia will head.

Right at the start of the game, an animated sequence demonstrates how you arrive in this strange new world. Britannia is effectively ignored in The Serpent Isle, so there's no more trudging the well trodden paths to Minoc or Cove and no more flogging of old story lines to death!

'As easy as ABC'

Serpent Isle is partly designed to be playable by those new to the Ultima range. However, there is an omission in the 'Beyond the Serpents Pillar' manual as originally published, which does cause a problem. On page 8 the symbols for the ophidian and druidic alphabets are shown. Unfortunately the English alphabet translation is not included, and the later double-letter symbols could confuse players. The translation is published in the previous Ultimas, but here is the full cipher.



This makes Serpent Isle an excellent game for those new to Ultima as this latest release does not assume knowledge of the ways of the Avatar, the shrines and mantras (the one exception here is the traditional runic alphabet, omitted in the manual. See the inset below.)

Upon landing on the isle leave the ship at once and quickly have a look at your inventory. You will note that, for a change, your party is armed and armoured to the teeth with the very best that Britannia can offer.

Proceed south and you will notice that the weather is behaving somewhat strangely. You are unable to avoid the electrical storms, so you'd better take things as they come. The changes to your inventory and the fate of your companions is mandatory. Thus starts your adventures in the Serpent Isle and your first quest will be to find your fellow travellers.

Thoxa the Xenkan monk will set the scene, and you should take careful notes of all she says. A note of warning here: Serpent Isle has a much more involved plot than earlier games, and in particular the storyline is much tighter. In previous Ultimas if you accidentally stumbled across a character before you should have done, he would impart the information and clues in any event. This is certainly not the case in Serpent Isle, which is more 'flag-based' than any other Ultima. This means that you must either speak to the right person, or complete the correct task to set a 'flag'. The gaming system will then note this, and trigger the next set of events, which may even require you to speak to another non-playing character (NPC) to set a further flag. The net effect is that those who normally wander around the gaming world in a 'scatter-gun' policy will come unstuck and find they cannot progress until they achieve certain goals. The storyline is therefore very defined, but in fairness, with some imaginative writing Origin has avoided giving the game a linear feel. However the flag setting is generally very strict, and in places

extremely subtle. A player may well grind to a halt with apparently nowhere to go, but if this does happen then just go back and speak to every NPC.

Thoxa also invokes the games copy protection, and if you want some amusement try getting the answers wrong, and then do two things: check your characters icon and try and speak to someone else – oink, oink! As an adjunct to this, you will also come across more copy protection when you get a spell book in Moonshade later in the game. Save before you visit the Magister to receive the spell book, because it is quite easy to get a question wrong even with the manual at your disposal. Mess up the copy protection and the game will rapidly become unplayable.

Head south to find one lost friend and again make a note of the change of possessions. Shamino will start to make a list that will enable you to keep track of things. Thoxa informs you of a hidden area that will yield some helpful items. The lockpicks will open the locked chests, and note that there is another room to the north with a scroll and serpents scales.

Inventory management can become a real headache, so any time you have a chance to get a bag, take it! These can be kept within the party's inventory and

Monitor – City of the Knights

1. Window Harnna
2. Cantra
3. Flicker
4. Caladin
5. Templar
6. Shazzana
7. Brendan
8. Marsten
9. Lucilla
10. Lydia
11. Andral
12. Cellia
13. Spektor
14. Krayg
15. Standarr

A= Training hall
B= Crematorium
C= Luther's house
D= Templar's house
E= Shazzana's house
F= List field
G= Banquet hall
H= Lydia's tattoo parlour
I= Jail
J= Sculptures
K= Well
L= Town Hall
M= Provisions shoppe
N = Slashing sword

Visit the crematorium and take a close look at the curtains. The catacombs will bring you to a sad occasion that will lead you to a very special quest.

Another absentee is within sight, but you will not be able to do much in Monitor until you gain some respect, so the knight's test should be tackled. Iolo has upset one or two locals so he's 'busy' at present; you need to find him and then speak to Lord Marsten to obtain his release.

He will also give you the password to the knight's test (see map overleaf), and the party should now be restored to full strength with Dupre's return.

Ask around and you'll find another who is about to take the test – this person will share some good advice with you.

The knight's test introduces a challenging sequence early in the game, but the secret is to follow other's advice and not to panic!

The map above will guide you through, but the tricky parts of this section are manipulating objects to get to other things, and searching walls at the right place to find secret doors.

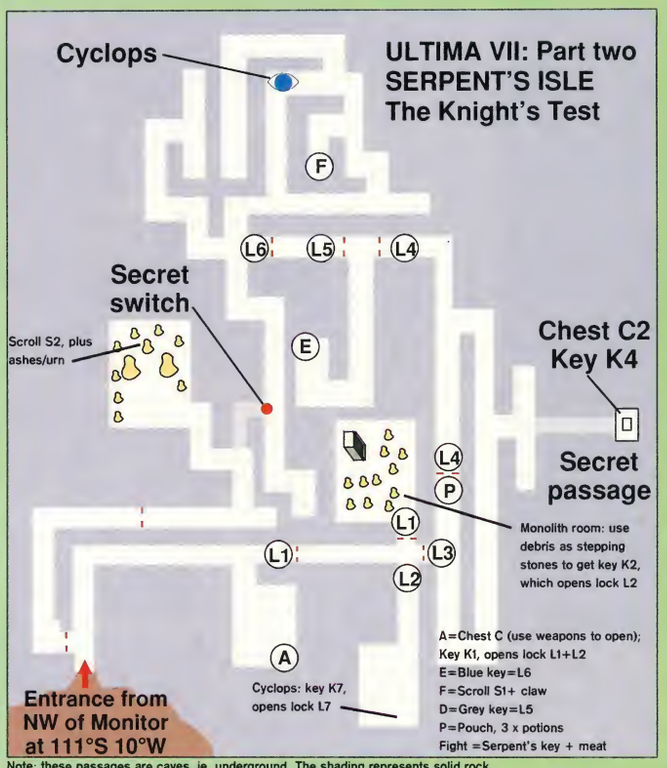
used to store specific items such as keys, food, potions and money. On the subject of money, each of three towns has its own currency, and in the towns there is a money changer who will convert from one to another, but in the best banking traditions he or she will deduct a 'commission'. Gold coins, gold bars, jewellery and gems can also be cashed, and may provide the most universal alternative.

South of the cave is a pile of bones in which you'll find Shamino's magic bow and sometimes some food. Gather food when you can, and note that clicking on an animal corpse will usually revel some meat. There is a dead pig close to the walls of Monitor which you would be advised to check out. Remember also that you will not be able to cast spells for some time so the reagents should be carefully husbanded.

The morality level of Serpent's Isle seems to be that you can steal, as long as you don't get caught. If you do get sticky fingers, do it preferably at night, with no one else nearby and close all the doors and the windows! If you are seen by guards, the best thing to do is to leave town and stay away for about a day, by which time your misdemenours should have been forgotten. To leave Monitor, exit through the northern gate. You do not actually have to ask the guard to open the gate for you, because you can do it yourself by clicking on the winch. Don't let yourself be caught, or it's the end of the line for you!

This still may not be foolproof and if you are incarcerated, even if you figure a way to get out, you've probably lost your belongings.

The knight's test



Note: these passages are caves, ie, underground. The shading represents solid rock.

Two torches lead the way. Use the blood on the goblin king's ashes and kill the wolf. Collect the carcass and the wolf, but keep up your guard against backstabbers.

Follow instructions with regard to the two ladies Lucilla and Cellia, giving the latter a day to complete her trade. Now Marsten will see you in a different light and a bean feast is guaranteed. It all ends up like an old Western but you've earned your spurs and should look for a mark of respect. Lydia will assist but all is not what it seems and perhaps the healer Karna can help.

This should now point you towards other vistas, but Monitor has several traitors that need to be wheedled out one by one.

Serpent's Isle consists of three main towns, Fawn, Moonshade and the first you will explore – Monitor. This is the City of Courage, and home to three different orders of knights, or pikemen, as they like to call themselves. The orders co-exist peacefully, but that is not to say that they don't enjoy a little friendly rivalry. The knights tend to look down upon civilians as a rule, so if you want to make progress you will have to take the Knight's Test and become a fully-fledged member of one of the orders.

To take the test, you will need the permission of Marsten, Monitor's leader. This should not cause a problem. Try and get as much fighting practice as possible prior to taking the test, since it involves some combat. Either go to the List Field in the south of the town for a spar, or explore the surrounding countryside and find some monsters to kill. There are goblins to the north, trolls to the east and ravenous wolves just about everywhere. Once you have amassed enough experience points, you can opt to train with someone and thus improve your characteristics.

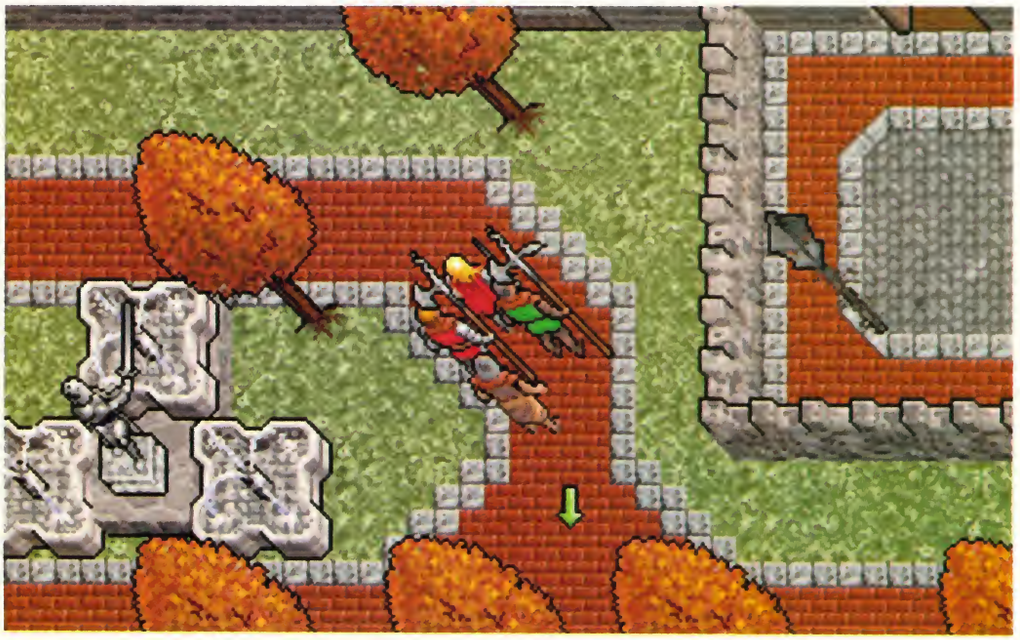
There are various people you can train with, each giving different benefits. To improve strength, train with Caladin who is at the List Field between 9am and midday. If agility is a weak point, train with Shazzana who is at the List Field between 3pm and 6pm. There are other trainers, but these two are the best.

Once you are suitably advanced, go to the Knight's Test north-east of Monitor and talk to Shmed. He will ask for the password which Marsten should have given you. Don't worry about remembering it: it will automatically appear as a speech option.

You must take the test on your own. You will be equipped with leather armour and a crude mace, and anything else you need will be found in the test.

Various keys are dotted around the test, and some of these are hidden in secret rooms. There are two invisible passages, the first of which is located near some exploding chests whilst the second is marked by two torches hanging close together on a wall. The rest is fairly straightforward overall, so long as you take care to avoid the Cyclops.

Once you have passed the test, go to Lydia to receive your tattoo, and then take the animal skin to Cellia and the meat to Lucilla. You are now well on your way to that coveted knighthood!



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QED

Ultima Underworld II

Robin Matthews puts the final touches to the Scintillus Academy, touches the Ethereal Void and moves towards the conclusion of Origin's blockbuster

Part four: *before the ethereal void*

The Scintillus Academy (continued)

At this stage your hero should be perched at the beginning of level seven – non reversible processes. This is another column lowering level like level three, but much tougher. Each column has an arrow embedded on the top of it. If you jump on to a pillar, the column that the arrow points to will be lowered. The object of the exercise is to jump on the correct pillars to get to the far side.

The enclosed diagram shows the route, but if you just want some general advice avoid the pillars running alongside the path, and note that you will need a key (or use up some mana) to open a locked door.

Level 8 of the Scintillus Academy is a series of sparkly teleports that take you around the levels of a square maze. The numbers at the entry point don't give a clockwork clue, but again the enclosed maps should help. Some useful runes here – ylem, wis,uus, grav and por, an – plus that which you really look for in this world. But, there's more to come as you have your first encounter with the ethereal void.

Level eight of the academy will lead you into a small part of the void, to where the secure vault has been constructed. This area cannot be mapped and it's worthwhile saving regularly. The key found earlier on level eight will open the first two doors, and at the third cast (spell or scroll) either the open spell, or turn 90 degrees (3 o'clock) and then cast telekinesis on the switch.

In the canals, find the fourth door and cast 'open': mana restore potions are invaluable in the void. Now things should be really warming up and you have to select from three doors. The room to the right will give you a key that can be used in the room ahead, once you've pressed the button in the room to the left! Don't hang around as the lava will make your eyes water, and the despoiler will give you a really hard time. (Despoiler statistics: vitality 125, uses poisonious attacks, acid spit and is resistant to fire).

Freeze time can be the best course of action, but sometimes he'll just ignore you. Open the door and pass through the purple portal. When all at sea, don't get blue, but go for the white path. Take your time along here, since there is far more than meets the eye, and things are not quite as they seem.

If you've found the vault you've done well and will be rewarded by potions, flam runes and more. Don't rush off as there is still more subterfuge in this area, especially if you can handle it. If not, then a doubly moving experience may be the only method. In this very secure area are some of the most potent items in the game, but careful with that fiery axe.

This concludes The Scintillus Academy – now it's into the penultimate world.

Meanwhile ... back in the castle

As you explore the eight worlds, make sure that you regularly go back to the castle and speak to the people trapped there. Nystul and Miranda are very important, and as you solve quests and worlds events will start to happen 'back at the ranch'.

One thing to be very careful about is a bug in the first release of the game involving Lord British and the servants. Early on you are told the servants are unhappy, and are asked to raise this with Lord British. Once you do this he will think on it: if you return to him too early he will remain in permanent thought and the servants will eventually go on strike.

Nystul then becomes too weak to warm up the gems and you cannot enter New Worlds nor as a result progress in the game. This loop cannot be broken, but Origin has now issued a patch disk that fixes this and some other 'added features'. If you do not have the patch do not go back to Lord British until you have sufficiently progressed.

In the castle some sad events cannot be avoided and you will also receive keys to new areas. The Golden Rule is go back there often and speak to everyone!

Additional spells and things

Here's a couple of very handy additions to the standard Underworlds spellbook:

Quas an corp	–	**valour**
Uus des por	–	**bounce**
In an flam	–	**frost**
Rel sanct ylem	–	**repair**
Vas ort ylem	–	**enchant**

The frost spell can be particularly effective against fire creatures.

The enchant spell is a real corker – it can be used repeatedly on items, armour, weapons and wands. It increases the effectiveness of items up to a 'unsurpassed level'. Beware some objects will explode if they are over enchanted.

The repair spell can be used on armour, weapons, lamps, light spheres and even food!

The Tombs of Praecor Loth

Four tough levels which house the remains of many heroes. The tombs contain some of the hardest combat in Underworld II and should not be attempted until you have virtually finished the previous six worlds. Dotted around level one are several pieces of map, which when collected will automatically reveal new areas. Most fights are not too bad, use magic as and when you can – shockwave is brilliant in disposing of hordes of skeletons, rats and other low life. The blackrock gem can be found as long as you don't make a mountain out of a boulder and the fire elemental can be doused if time stands still. High level magic almost gets too powerful at this stage, but try out new spells as your experience allows.

Level two is really only descriptive with NPCs adding to the storyline and Helena giving you direction.

Silanus has a clue for later things and there are lots of goodies lying around tricky level three.

Level four has the hardest combat in the game overall with three liches to be overcome. Magic users will certainly find it much easier, but the fights may need to be repeated several times to achieve success. Morphius is the first, but with a combination of freeze time (An nox) and the smite spells he will fall.

Lord Umbra deserves the same treatment, and if you attack him first the two Earth golems may not come into play. This will be two down, one to go, but the next stage may not be too obvious. It will seem that there are no alternatives, but disturb the pagan altar and new areas will open up near the outer limits.

The double doors will not budge, but if you do not 'fall' for the deception a secret room will be entered. Use 'shockwave' and 'walk water', then concentrate on taking out the demon. The rest will be simple now, and another key will result. This will open the double doors that then lead to an olden legend. Take note that it is possible to avoid all three liches and still get to Praecor Loth – once you have informed him of events he will then dispose of the trio in GARG fashion.

Take your time in PL's room, there are several important items including the noise maker that you require. By this time all of the first seven worlds should be complete, it's now time to cut the power lines and step into the ethereal void – the final chapter ...

To be continued ...

Scintillus Academy: level eight

Tombs of Praecor: level one

Tombs of Praecor: level two

Tombs of Praecor: level three

QED TIPS

Do not attempt the tips marked with this icon unless you are sure you understand what you are doing. In any case, it's sensible to make back-ups of the files before you start tinkering around with program editors. PC Review is not going to accept any responsibility for damage to data incurred when trying out tips, so be warned! Send all your cheats to QED Tips at the usual PC Review address. We'll print as many as possible each month and the sender of the highlighted Star Tip wins a software prize – so don't forget to include details of your PC's configuration with your letter.

Wizardry VII

Replies have tumbled into the mail basket in response to Kevin Cottrell's pleas for help in Wizardry VII. Gordon Hibbert, Peter Doherty and David Tierney have offered some assistance.

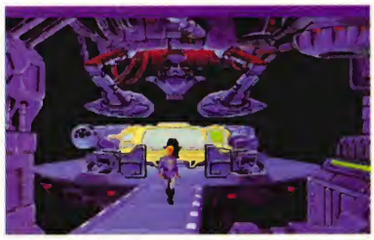
To gain access to the Rattkin Ruins you must first have completed the tasks in Orkorge Castle and have in your possession a small Bonsai tree from the wizards table. Take this tree to the Sacred Grove which is off to the left of the forest path before the main ruins. Place the Bonsai tree on the stone carving in the middle of the Grove floor.

A large tree will grow, ask you who summons MAA-GOOGG, and you should reply with your character's name. Now go back to the ruins until you get to two pillars surrounded by bushes. When you walk to the far side of the left pillar, a tree will lift you up into the entrance.

Wikum's Globe of Power is in the middle of the hidden temple, which is under the sunken Cathedral on the second level under Munkharama. You must already have the moonstone and find a statue in a pool of water in the main courtyard. Get the stones from the four corners of the pool and put them on the four raised platforms that surround it. Swim back to the statue then and use the moonstone when you are standing just in front of it and you will drop down to the level below. A couple of mazes later and the Orb will be all yours.

And if anybody out there is still stuck, a Wizardry VII cluebook can be obtained from USGold on (021) 625 3366 for the princely sum of 27 chickens or a more reasonable £12.99.

The prize this month goes to Gordon Hibbert who was first in with the Wizardry answer. Maybe someone out there has a complete solution?



Space Quest V

David Hamilton was stuck on the SCS Goliath getting repeatedly killed by a guard. Mark Landin has beamed aboard to offer some words of encouragement.

Once you have replaced the distributor cap on the warp drive, wait again for the creature to do its checks. Walk back to the stairs and wait again for creature to finish checks. Now walk through to the door, lift up the grating and enter the ducts. Follow the ducts and elevator shaft up to level two and you should find the forcefield switch on the wall.

Press this switch, wait until all of the crew are on the pad and as soon as the doors close, call to Cliffy, beam back to the ship and quickly get to your seat. Open fire on the blob and when it comes to attack activate the RRS. Tell Flo to abandon ship and then activate the self-destruct mechanism on the panel in front of you ... (a few more simple tasks and you've finished the whole game)

Space Quest IV

The mysterious Steven, stuck last month in Space Quest IV, can now be saved. Hurrah! Ken Gregory from Liverpool has the silver-lined answer. When the three men throw you out of the bar, push over their motorcycles using the 'hand' icon. Run away left. Then return to the bar. You may be run over a few times but you'll make it eventually.

Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders

Mitul Patel of London has ground to a halt in this oldie from LucasArts, unable to get the yellow crystal from the statue. QED replies: use the yellow crayon on the strange markings near the bottom of the statue to make them the same as the ones you found on Mars. The statue will open and you can take the crystal shard.

Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker

David Evans of Usk in Gwent has discovered a small cheat for Archer Maclean's definitive snooker game. During a real game, when all the reds have been pocketed and you are left with the colours, instead of potting them in the order that you are meant to: yellow, green, brown, blue, pink, black, try potting any colour you want. If you see an easy blue when you're supposed to be going for the yellow, take it. The computer's hardly going to smash its cue over your head in retaliation.

To perform this cheat you must use the number keys 2-7 at the top of the keyboard and the nominated ball will change, ie, 2 = yellow and 7 = black.

Star Trek 25th Anniversary

Jeff Cornwall is hopelessly stuck on Vengeance, the last mission in the game. He keeps getting blown to atoms by three ships that attack on the way to Vardaine. QED replies: sadly this isn't a place that you can get stuck. There is no set way to beat the ships, just arm your weapons, raise your shields and go for it! Remember, i) don't fly too fast, ii) deal with the nearest ship first.

Strike Commander

If life with the Wildcats is beginning to pall, take heart and try a cheat from Nicholas Owen of London. Boot up your wonder PC, play Strike Commander and then save your game. Now quit, go back to DOS and edit the saved game using a HEX editor like PC Tools or Xtree Gold. The following positions can be changed to suit your requirements (FF being the maximum).

Location	Affects
171	No. of AIM-9M missiles
17B	No. of paveways
17D	No. of rocket pods
173	No. of mavericks
179	No. of 500lb bombs
175	No. of anti-runway bombs
17F	No. of Amraams
177	No. of MK20 cluster bombs
19B	No. of tanks hit
199	No. of planes hit
205	Planes lost

To alter the amount of money you have to change two bytes of code, one at 189 and the other at 18A. For example, to get $8550m convert 8850 to HEX — which is 2292. The 22 goes in byte 18A and the 92 in position 189. The maximum amount of money which you can get is $65535m or FF FF.

Remember, don't change the code unless, (a) you really know what you're doing and, (b) you've played Strike enough to really and truly want to cheat.

Civilization

Daniel Fraser from Falmouth has been loyally proving that MicroProse's Civilization is still keeping people play-

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ing months and months after its initial release. If you should want to topple and crush the odd enemy empire, here's a quick and easy way to do it.

Instead of taking out one city at a time, try going straight for the capital city. Capture said capital (nuclear and armour are recommended) and this will trigger off a civil war within the empire which will split it in two. The war leaves the two sides fighting each other rather than you and you can get on with building your spaceship (populated by 50,000 settlers) and winning the game.

Ultima VII pt 2: Serpent Isle

Cal Jones, staff writer extraordinaire and leather goddess of the office, has a quick tip for Origin's latest RPG. During the course of the game you should come across a character called Boydon who is willing to join your party.

Unlike other party members, Boydon can't be resurrected if killed so you must check on his health during fights and other damaging situations. Use healing spells on him where necessary.

At one point in the game you will go to meet Batlin at the Wall of Lights. This could be fatal for Boydon so ask him leave just before you reach Batlin (just after fighting Deadeye, Palos and Brunt — Batlin's henchmen) and then retrieve him later when it's safer. Though, when it is ever safe in an Ultima game?

Ultima Underworld

Lars-Ivar Igesund from Norway has been stuck (like many, many others before him) in this huge Origin creation. Last issue we mentioned all about Garamon's bones but we didn't actually tell you where to find them (if you don't already know, that is). Lars-Ivar's second question referred to The Key of Infinity and where it should be used.

QED replies: Garamon's bones (as far as Cal remembers) are located on level eight towards the north-east of the map. Poor old Garamon's remains will be found surrounded by various runes and there will probably be a wand nearby.

As for the Key of Infinity, this is used on the last level to open the door, behind which you will find the Slasher of Veils. The above mentioned door is found on the little island, surrounded by lava.

Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade

It's an oldie but the great numbers of people stuck on this game are proving that it's still posing some tricky problems for amateur archeologists everywhere. This time around Huw Evans from Gwynedd can't pass Biff, the huge guard and Tony Simpson can't open the door with the skull piano.

QED replies: to get past Biff intact you have to have the trophy from level three. Once you have it, go down to the kitchen and fill the trophy with ale. Go back to level three and confront Biff. Without saying anything at all offer him the trophy. He will consequently drink down the ale, get absolutely legless and you can floor him with one punch.

To play the skull piano correctly you must have the Grail Diary. Look at the musical notation carefully. Each line represents one skull, the highest being the skull furthest to the left, the lowest the one on the far right. Play the skulls that correspond to the notes and the door should open automatically.

For those of you stuck deep in the quagmire of confusion, struggling onwards through the swamp of ignorance, here once again (see panel right) is our indispensable guide to the myriad of helplines currently offering aid to those of you who are terminally beleaguered.

Send all contributions to PC Review at Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. If you have any tips or cheats, mark the envelope "TIPS" in big capitals.

If you're stuck on a game, send in your cry for help marking the envelope "Help Wanted". If you're replying to a lost soul write "Help Supplied". Lastly, don't forget to include details of your PC in case you win the Star Tip prize.

HELP WANTED

Martian Dreams

I need to fill the canals with water from the melted ice at the north pole but I can't get the lens working. They have all been repaired but I don't know what to type in on the control panel near the tower that is covered in weeds

Charles Jordan
Northampton

Eye of the Beholder II

On the fourth level of the Silver Tower (the one with the mouths) what item is needed for the mouth who's riddle is:"Items born of greed are what I need, one for each year and one less to fear."...and where can I find it?

Charles Jordan (again)
Northampton

Curse of Enchantia

I'm in the Land of the Lost having trouble getting the remote control from beneath the lips. Also after entering the hole in the ship I can't seem to use the planks to cross the water. Any help in this whole section would be welcome.

Andrew Campbell
Newcastle

Eric the Unready

I am hopelessly stuck in the Land of the Gods. There is a spiral staircase going up a mountain, a goddess bathing in a pool and a golden key. Please can someone tell me what I should be doing?

Clair Boreham
West Sussex

First Samurai

If anybody is still playing this game from Ubisoft, QED has a caller who wants to know how to pick up more lives. He's picked up everything but is now getting stuck on level six with only one live left. Help would be appreciated.

Helpline numbers

Acclaim	(0962) 877788
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Digital Integration	(0276) 678806
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Access

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Software SEARCH

Looking for that elusive piece of software which answers all your computing requirements and makes your life easier? Try PC Review's software search

Graphics applications

Q I'm looking for software that does title pages in colour or black and white (similar to Jetset). I need different fonts and borders and can print coloured writing/coloured pages. I am also looking for a program that colours graphs and illustrations.

Peter Davie
Essex

A *What you need is either a desk top publishing or drawing package, possibly both. If you want to create title pages with a mixture of text and illustrations you can use a DTP package to create and layout the text but you will need some sort of drawing package to create the illustrations.*

There are lots of DTP packages available. I happen to think that PagePlus is one of the best at a reasonable price — but Timeworks is a very close runner up and some people prefer it. If you want a shareware DTP program then try Envisage, but when you register it doesn't turn out any much cheaper then PagePlus or Timeworks.

However if your application fits into the category of display banners, cards, calendars and letter heads you could try Print Partner (which is shareware), or Print Shop Deluxe — an extract from which was on our May 1993 cover disk (from Electronic Arts on (0753) 549442).

You don't say how you intend to print the colour output but whatever method you intend it is important that you make sure that the package supports the printer — and in colour!

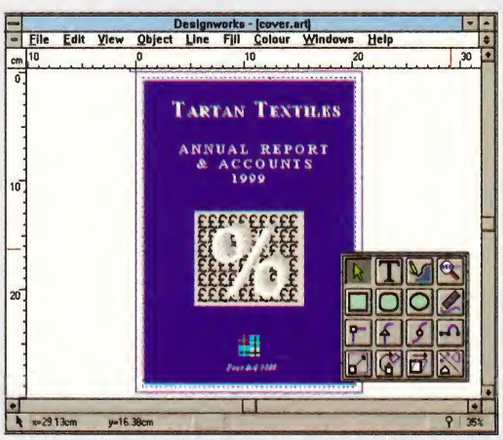
When it comes to drawing packages the choice is much more difficult because there are no really good low -priced packages.

DesignWorks comes the closest to fitting the bill, I think. It's a good package with only the odd omission and a few rough edges.

The market leader is Corel Draw! but my favourite in this price bracket has to be Professional Draw — it's easy to use and powerful. I can't at the moment recommend any shareware drawing (as opposed to painting) packages.

You might just be able to get away with just a drawing package. The key question is how much text you need to work with. All drawing packages allow you to set blocks of text and headlines much like a DTP package.

You only really start to need a DTP package when you need to include a page or more of text — and even then a drawing package will do the job if you are patient.



DesignWorks is a low cost drawing package that might do everything you need.

Planning kitchens

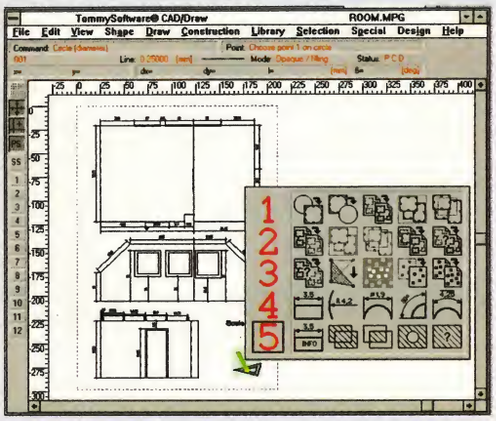
Q I own a 386 PC, with SVGA, 4Mb RAM, DOS 5.0, and both hard and floppy disk drives. I have also installed Windows 3.1. I'm looking for a program that will help me design and plan kitchens, I wonder if any such program is available and if so, where can I get a copy?

Dave Parker
Redditch

A *In principle you can design room layouts, including kitchens, using almost any CAD — Computer Aided Design — package. A CAD package allows you to draw plans, but using a symbol library, you can design room layouts. All you do is draw the outline of the room and then load symbols for the proposed furniture — built in or otherwise. Each symbol can be moved as if it was a miniature of the real thing — and so you can easily try out different layouts. This method works for kitchens, bathrooms and any room that you can find a symbol library with the appropriate furniture.*

There are quite a few CAD packages on the market but they're usually high cost products. If you want a Windows application then my recommendation is for Drafix for Windows. For DOS, MegaCad is a good package and so is DraftChoice, but then there really is a huge choice. If you would like to try some shareware then I would recommend CadDraw for Windows or TurboDraw for MS-DOS.

The advantage of using a general purpose CAD package is that once you have learned how to



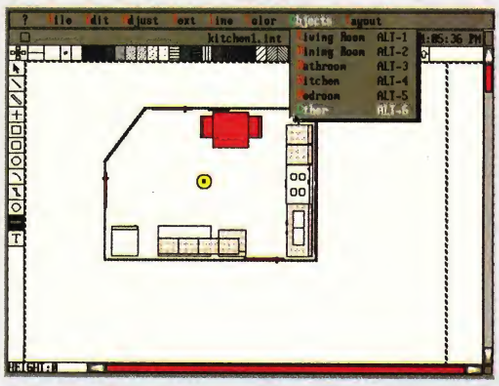
A typical general drawing package.

use it you can draw general plans. An alternative approach would be Visio. This is a general drawing package that has lots of symbol libraries that allow you to put together a floor plan without having to actually draw much.

Turning to more specific packages there is still a choice. For example, FloorPlan Plus (available in both DOS and Windows versions) is, as its name suggests, aimed at creating floor plans and is supplied with clip art for doors, windows and furniture, etc. Design Your Own Home Interiors (DOS) also facilitates floor plans and emphasises arranging furnishings and exploring colour schemes and again has clip art of furniture. If it's only kitchens that interest you, Autodesk — the CAD specialist best known for the market leader drafting program AutoCAD — has just launched a range of programs for DIY use, one of which is specifically for kitchens.

So, with so many suggestions, where should you start? If you want to draw general plans as well as kitchen layouts then start with a CAD or symbol-oriented drawing package — perhaps a shareware one to see what your needs really are. If you are sure that you only want to draw kitchen plans then Autodesk's Kitchen (£59 from Force 2 International, 0844 261872) seems the most specific but for home plans in general try FloorPlan Plus (DOS £49.95, Windows £69.95 from Guildsoft) or Design Your Own Home Interiors (£59, Shareware plc 0297 24088).

Bibliographic data



A kitchen plan in Design Your Own Home Interiors.

HELP WANTED

Can any reader help with a source for software for... ?

Shoot em ups

Only the other day I was at my friend's house playing on his Amiga. After the shock of moving from a 486 PC to the poor Amiga we began to make a computer game. My friend had a program called, Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit, priced around £12. With this all you had to do was draw sprites, objects, fire power and scenery and edit the game.

Is there a program like the Amiga's Shoot 'Em Up Construction Kit hopefully priced at about £12 available on the PC?

Ben Glover
Wigmore

C64 emulator

I am looking for a C64 emulator, that will work with 5.25 disks, and that will also work with tapes (not necessary). I am also looking for an Apple Mac plus emulator.

Niels Brouwers
Holland

After saying there wasn't a shareware Spectrum emulator and being proved wrong I feel sure there must be a C64 emulator. I am pretty certain that there isn't a Mac emulator — if there was Apple would soon sue whoever was selling it!

Information Wanted

If you sell or distribute software then Software Search would like to hear about it — especially if it is an unusual or rare application. Send information to **Software Search, PC Review, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU**

Q I have a 286 processor with hard drive, DOS 5.0 and Windows 3.0. I am looking for software that will provide technical reference (bibliography), a database with word search capability, allowing setup of numerous fields and capacity for a minimum of 2,000 records. Preferably under Windows and providing a licence for resale.

Nigel Hetherington
Clwyd

A *In principle, you shouldn't need a special purpose bibliographic database – a general purpose one will do. If you are prepared to invest a little time finding out how to use a database such as Approach for Windows, or Paradox SE for DOS, then you should be able to put together the system which you are aiming at.*

If you want to sell the finished database then you will either have to sell a copy of the database software along with your data or invest in a database compiler — like the full version of Paradox, for example.

However, it sounds as if what you could get a long way with is a freeform database — one designed for the particular sort of searches which you have in mind.

I would suggest Idealist from Blackwell Scientific Software (£275, on 0865 240201) or AskSAM (£199, available from Software Paradise, on 0222 887521).

If you would like to take advantage of Software Search fill in the form, right, or reproduce it in letter form, and send it to PC Review, Software Search, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringson Lane, London EC1R 3AU. You can also fax your request to (071) 972 6710, or e-mail it to pcreview@CIX.compulink.co.uk.

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Bemused, befuddled, or bewildered about your PC? If your hardware gives you headaches and you're stricken with software seize-ups, share your problem with Q&A's Mike James and he'll endeavour to help

How many disk drives?

Q I currently run a 386DX-40 with 4Mb memory and a 40Mb Western digital hard card, Sound Blaster and a 1.44 Mb floppy drive.

I have recently acquired a 40Mb IDE hard disk. Whenever I try to run the hard disk and the hard card simultaneously the hard card always boots up, not allowing me to access the hard disk. I asked a knowledgeable friend of mine about this and he said that I couldn't use both hard card and hard disk at the same time. I was wondering whether this was true or whether there was any configuration or software packages that would rectify this problem.

David Bird
Bristol

A *Your knowledgeable friend is indeed knowledgeable. A hard disk doesn't connect directly to a PC. It is connected via a controller card. Most PCs have only a single controller fitted but the controller can support two disks if it is an ESDI or SCSI controller or four disks if it is an ST-506 controller. In theory, it is possible to fit two controllers to a PC but this is difficult and in some cases it is impossible.*

How does all this relate to your hard card and IDE drive? The hard card has a built-in disk controller and so does the IDE drive, hence they don't work together. What this means is that you have to choose which drive to use and as they are both 40Mb there isn't much to choose between. If it helps — the IDE is likely to be faster.

Take a saw to it?

Q I have an Epson PC Portable 286 AT with 640K memory, 21Mb hard disk drive, one 3.5 (720) floppy and CGA graphics. The flip-up screen is an LCD with four colours (dark blue, mid blue, pale blue and white). Can you replace the CGA with an EGA or VGA card?

J E Forbes
Belfast

A *The curse of the portable is that to make it small they had to make it non-standard and non-expandable. The video electronics is always built in to the motherboard to save space. Even if the portable has an optional standard ISA interface and you did add an external EGA or VGA card you would also need to add an external monitor as the LCD display is built with a fixed number of dots. A CGA display has 320 dots by 200 dots and no matter what you do you can't increase its resolution.*

Sound Blaster bug

Q In the June issue of PC Review, L T Bailey wrote to Q&A stating that he had a problem with Red Baron and the sound produced by his Sound Blaster card. I too had a similar problem and discovered what appears to be a bug in Red Baron using Sound Blaster. If I selected 'Sound Blaster', I got only music, as if I had only an Ad Lib card, but if I selected 'Ad Lib', I got music and digitised effects (engine, machine gun, etc). So I think they are the wrong way round in the program.

Mark Rogers
Middlesex

A *Many thanks! You can never rule out a bug in the software but equally it is too tempting to blame everything on faulty software. However if more than one user and more than one Sound Blaster card is experiencing the same problem and the only common factor is the software — then the finger of suspicion points at the software.*

If you know of any bugs, and I mean know, not suspect, then I am always interested to hear about it.

Weak battery

Q Every time I hard boot or turn on my computer, the counter at the beginning goes fast forward and a message comes up, "CMOS Checksum failure Press F1 to resume." So when I press F1 it takes

me into the set-up program. So I adjusted the time and date and it worked. You're probably wondering what the problem is. It's just that I want to know why. Is it really that important to know a correct date and time for a computer which only knows what I tell it? It is a BIOS set-up program.

The information you gave in Issue 16 on modems and bulletin boards, let's say, buzzed me, dazzled me, to such an extent ... I have no idea what you were talking about.

Now I have a modem which I fear is quite old. It's a Miracom Courier HST (is that too old?). Now a few questions. What is a baud rate? How do I find what baud rate my computer/modem is? I have a piece of software which I think is related to the modem (ProComm Plus) what does it do? You mentioned bulletin boards in which you could leave messages, requests and place adverts. How would I get on to them? Will the modem be very expensive on my phone bill?

Rahel Sareen
Wembley

A *The need to type in the date and time isn't some strange obsession on your computer's part but very likely a minor fault. All PC/AT machines have a clock which runs even when it is switched off. The clock is powered by a battery that also supplies current to maintain the data stored in a small section of memory called the CMOS RAM.*

The error message that you see when you start the machine is telling you that something stored in the CMOS RAM has changed since you last switched on. This could be because the battery is failing and hasn't enough power to run it or it could be that the clock isn't connected to the battery. Sometimes there is a switch or jumper on the motherboard that can be set to connect or disconnect the clock to the battery.

I can't tell you exactly what the problem is, but it is almost certain to be something to do with the battery or its connections. Have a poke about inside and see if it is a loose connection. If that doesn't work, try replacing the battery. If the battery is going flat it is important that you replace it because one day soon the whole contents of the CMOS RAM will be lost and you will have to type in rather more than the date!

As to the modem questions — well there are rather a lot! See last month's Q&A update for some general info on modems. Specifically — the HST modem is good, but a bit dated. It uses a custom high speed mode that some bulletin boards still support but you will have to check.

ProComm Plus is my favourite DOS comms package so you have made a good choice there! What does it do? It dials the phone number and manages the connection allowing you to type messages to the bulletin board, see what it has to say back to you and even upload and download files.

Baud rate is simply a measure of the number of characters per second the modem transfers. It's not exactly true but good enough to say that dividing the baud rate by 10 gives the number of characters per second. As to the cost: if the bulletin board is close enough to be a local call you pay a local rate per minute. A long distance call and you will be charged long distance rates — it's as easy as that. Of course if you log on to one of the information systems that charge for connect time you will pay something directly to them as well as. How much depends on the service and how much you use it.

A tall tale

Q I would be grateful for any advice for running X-Wing which I purchased following your review in the May PC Review. I use DOS 6 and Windows 3.1 and normally have no problems with either work or games. X-Wing is an excellent game which needs more memory than most. Most of the time it runs perfectly with synchronised sound and speech along with smooth graphics.

I am requesting help because every 30 minutes or so at random (not necessarily while in the thick of battle) the program freezes or locks with a motionless screen and continuing music until I reboot. I have noticed that hard disk access does not seem to be a factor. The read.me file suggests trying DMA sharing or alternative DMA numbers for the Sound Blaster Pro card so I've tried both and left it on DMA 1, but with DMA sharing enabled.

The technical support line told me that the problem was my DOS 6 with the use of DoubleSpace but I explained that I haven't compressed my hard disk yet. I was then told to run the game at bus speed but this results in jerky graphics and loss of synchronisation with speech, etc. The support line then advised me to try the game with no sound but that would really spoil it! It was then suggested that I fit a separate games card to relieve the Sound Blaster Pro card but I already use the games card which MJN kindly gave me.

Finally I was told that the problem is my Quickshot joystick as they are "not very compatible" and I should purchase any joystick made by CH.

Any of the above advice may be true but I would be grateful for your opinion as to which is the most likely cause of the program locking.

M R Preston
Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

A *It sounds as though technical support doesn't have a clue either! I can just imagine the frustration at the other end of the telephone as you knocked each of their suggestions down. To be fair to them, I have to admit that when some one reports 'random lock-up', I too tend to cast around for ideas and some of them are equally as wild.*

Random lockups can be caused by incorrect configuration, a bug in the software or a machine hardware failure. The only way that you can pin down which one is the cause is by trying to notice exactly when lockups occur and try to find the common factors.

From your letter it is clear that you have already been trying to do this and you seem to have eliminated the most obvious possibilities. I would try running the game without sound to see if this cures it. If it does, then you can at least know that the fault is something to do with the sound system. You should continue in this way gathering evidence about the nature of the problem — but only change one factor at a time!

If the problem only ever happens with this particular piece of software then the chances are that it is to blame for the problem but this doesn't mean that it is a bug. It could be that X-Wing runs the system in a way that it isn't normally used and this could uncover an obscure configuration error — such as a DMA channel, I/O port address or interrupt clash — or even a hardware problem. Clearly you have to check for configuration errors and this is a matter of making a list of which IRQ, port addresses and DMA channels are assigned to what cards. I would also make sure that you have disabled the built-in Sound Blaster Joystick port — remove link JP4.

Too fast?

Q I have a 386/33 SX, and I've had trouble with it since I bought it. I am starting to believe that it has some sort of a hardware fault. When I run Windows 3.1 (&3.0) at Turbo, I frequently get messages such as Application Errors. This does not happen however when Turbo is switched off, but at a non-Turbo speed of 12MHz it is just too slow to use.

Branko Obradovie
London

A *Believe it or not, the problem may be a design fault in the motherboard. Machines that work at 33MHz or faster have all the characteristics of a radio transmitter — after all VHF radio works at only three times this frequency! Designing a motherboard to work reliably at 33MHz is quite a difficult task and even if the manufacturer manages it their efforts can be spoiled by putting it in the wrong sort of case, not connecting everything up properly, or by overloading the expansion bus, etc. There is a second effect caused by working at higher speed and that is extra heat. The heat generated by the 386SX chip increases as the clock rate goes up. As a result it might be a heat related fault. To check this simply try running the machine with the cover open and see how long it takes for the problem to occur.*

If heat isn't the cause, check that the power supply is earthed, and that the socket it is plugged into has a working earth cable. Try moving all the connectors around, altering where the wires run, altering the

order in which the expansion cards are plugged in — even cleaning the board to remove dust might help! *If the motherboard has a slight speed problem then very small changes might make it work properly.*

Finally, as 33MHz 386SX chips are relatively new it might be worth seeing if you really do have a 33MHz device installed and not a slower one being pushed beyond its certified operating frequency.

Expanded memory?

Q The last three cover disk games I have tried all needed expanded memory, Populous 2, Castle 2 and Lemmings 2. Kevin Harley's suggestion from Norwich, altering the Emm386.Exe line (I first had to add this line before I could alter it), loaded Lemmings 2 but, sadly, it would not play. The same was true of Paul Thain's idea from Kings Lynn. Neither had any effect on Populous 2 or Castles 2.

My system is an Acros 386SX-25 with 2Mb of RAM. DOS 5 and Windows 3.1 were preloaded and I use it mainly for word processing using Works for Windows. I am bemused and befuddled, as there seems to be so many different ways of altering memory; Smartdrv.exe, Emm386.exe, high memory, etc.

The explanation in the manual – just as the explanations for all the other memory managers – assumed I was a computer expert, which of course I am not. I am able to alter files using Editor but moving files into high memory is beyond me.

I have recently taken a subscription, but I wonder if this is a wise move if all I can do is read about the latest software gems (drool, drool). Or is there something I can do?

Would increasing memory to 4Mb help? If so, many use extended memory: why is not more software written for that format, why do we need expanded memory anyway? Or are these stupid questions?

Ian Hardy
Sheffield

A No, none of your questions are even remotely stupid! You'll find a general guide to the different types of memory in Q&A update in Issue 14 and advice about how to free the memory you need in Issue 18, but there are some specific points that your letter raises. Extended memory is only available on 286, 386 and 486 machines but expanded memory can be fitted to all types of PC – hence the support for expanded memory by games programs. As the original XT machine becomes less common, programs will start to use mostly extended memory – but this will no doubt result in letters to Q&A from XT owners!

The 386/486 can convert extended memory to expanded memory quite easily using EMM386 and if that's all you need you can forget the complexities of high memory, upper memory, loading high, etc. The only two problems you have are deciding where the page frame goes and how much memory you want to convert to expanded memory. The page frame sounds technical but it is just a free 64K area of memory used to implement the expanded memory.

The only tricky bit is finding a genuinely free area! You can do this by applying your knowledge of the machine – ie, become an expert by trial and error (which is what most of us do!) – or by buying a replacement for EMM386 that will automatically install itself – try QEMM386 or MS DOS 6. The most important thing I can tell you is that you shouldn't be distracted by other utilities, programs, ideas, etc. It really is EMM386 or a replacement memory manager that you need to concentrate on.

A 386SX-25 should be good enough for most games programs at the moment. Increasing the amount of memory to 4Mb will have a really big effect on how fast Windows runs — so I would recommend you look into it for your word processing and other uses of Works for Windows.

Send your queries to Q&A, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU, or, if you have access to CIX, the Compulink Information Exchange, you can e-mail us at: pcreview@cix.compulink.co.uk.

Mike James can only reply to your problems on this page, so please don't include SAEs or requests for personal replies.

Q&A *update*

The 586 processor

Most writers to Q&A have some worries about the power of the machine that they currently have and they often request for advice on upgrading. They ask, "When will my machine be obsolete?", "Should I buy a 386 or a 486?" and want to know how much faster will it really go. Even when the question isn't directly about machine power there is often a tail end paragraph mentioning it.

Now to set you all worrying some more, I would like to announce the availability of the 586 processor – the successor to the 486, which was the successor to the 386, which was the successor to the 286 and before that ... You can see that the improvement in processor performance has been going on for some time and there is nothing new in wondering exactly when your new machine will become outdated.

The confusing part is that none of this long line of x86 processors is actually obsolete — they are all compatible and there is still plenty of software that works with the original PC. Machines may not become completely obsolete but they do become effectively obsolete when they can't manage to run the majority of the software of the day fast enough. Perhaps it is because there is no absolute cut-off that makes a machine obsolete, we all have these creepy feelings that it is sneaking up on us all the time!

The good news is that the 586, or the Pentium as Intel has had to call it so that its name can be copyrighted, isn't something that will worry the average 486 owner. The reason is that the 586 is completely compatible with the 386/486 and there isn't as yet an overwhelming need to upgrade.

The 586 consists of two 486 style processors on a single chip and most of its speed increase comes from the pair being able to execute two instructions at the same time. To make this possible the software has to be optimised for the Pentium. Such optimised software will still run on a 386/486, and guess what, it actually runs faster on a 386/486 than the original! So we should all look forward to a speed increase due to the Pentium — without having to change our machines!

Another reason why you shouldn't fear the Pentium just yet is that Intel is having trouble making them. They run hot and they cost a lot of cash. I think it will be 1994 or 1995 before reasonably priced, reliable Pentium systems will be available and even then their main use will be in high performance network file servers or workstations. Who knows how long it will be before the price falls to a point where it influences ordinary every day software to make use of its amazing processing power and so begin the slow slide into obsolescence of the 486 — this is the eventual reward of every hard working PC.

This doesn't mean that everything is quiet in the processor world. A number of other manufacturers, such as, AMD and Cyrix are working hard on their own versions of the 486 and on providing a range of upgrade chips for existing 386SX and DX processors. What this means is that we might all be able to upgrade our machines to 486 performance before the 586 becomes a noticeable factor.

■ ***Mike James***

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Letters

PC Review welcomes letters on any subject under the PC sun. The editor will chop them to fit if need be, and we'll assume letters are for publication unless you state otherwise. Send your mail to letters, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU. Star letters win software prizes!

Lengthy introductions

I am fortunate enough to own a 486SX with a 100Mb hard disk. Apart from a number of serious applications I also have a number of games stored on the hard disk. This then results in a situation many people find themselves in, with hard disk space put at a premium.

With this being such a common situation, why is it in games such as AV8B Harrier Assault there is a file nearly 3Mb in size just for the introductory animation but no facility is offered in the game to delete this. It's great to watch these for the first few times but unfortunately you soon tire of it and want to get straight into the game.

For anyone playing AV8B Harrier Assault, it is possible to delete the files Intro.exe and Intro.anm to save space and skip the intro (DOS will just come out with "bad command or filename", then load the game), but surely I should not have to do this. I do not think it is past the skill of programmers to add such a facility for the game player. With such a feature, saving hard disk space would be much easier, not to mention safer, as you wouldn't have the worry of deleting the wrong files.

Finally, a note of congratulation to you. It is good to see a magazine finally offering up-to-date software with their subscription offers. Although I haven't taken advantage of the offer yet, if the games continue to be of that quality then I am sure I will be soon.

As another option though, couldn't it be possible to offer cheaper alternatives for people who didn't want a free gift or the cover disk for whatever reason? This would make the offer value for money for everyone.

Richard Temple
Watford, Herts

Lost Bard

Please can you help me? I have had various computers over the last 12 years, beginning with the humble ZX Spectrum 48K. I now own a PC which I use for work and pleasure and this is the reason for my writing. My favourite games of all time are the Bard's Tale series.

I recently saw The Bard's Tale Trilogy in a computor shop near to home. However, when I went back to the shop two weeks later to buy the compilation the shop had gone into liquidation and so my hopes were dashed.

Since then I have been phoning all the local shops trying to find someone who has the game or who can get hold of it, but to no avail.

I would be grateful for any information you can give me on where I can still acquire this set of games on as all I keep getting is, "Sorry, we don't sell that anymore".

S Watmough
Newton, Wigan

Try contacting either Electronic Arts, which published the original Bard's Tales in the UK, on (0753) 549442, or Interplay, the publisher, which now has its own UK office, on (0865) 390029.

Writing routines

I'm getting a bit cheesed off with the tone of your instructions!

The latest one in June 1993 suggested that there was a well established routine for writing to PC Review, so I checked through my back issues to see if it was me or if you had good reason to treat me like a fool. As I had suspected I found a variety of instructions given:

October 1992: Mark the envelope 'QED Help Wanted' and 'QED Help Supplied'

November 1992: Mark the envelope quite clearly 'Help Wanted' and 'Help Supplied'

December 1992: Mark the envelope 'Tips' – or you won't get anywhere

January 1993: No instructions

February 1993: Mark the envelope 'QED Tips' (not 'Help Wanted' or

'Help Supplied' or just 'QED', but 'Tips' OK?)

March 1993: Mark the envelope 'Help Wanted' or 'Help Supplied'

April 1993: No instructions

May 1993: to 'Help Wanted' or 'Help Supplied'

June 1993: Mark the envelope 'Tips', 'Help Wanted' or 'Help Supplied'. Failure to comply means letters in the bin!

Now, isn't it about time that PC Review made their mind up just how they would like their letters received?

In any case, as your customers we don't care how overworked your mail sorters are – that's your problem. By changing your instructions every month the situation is clearly self-inflicted.

Sheila Wright
Eye, Peterborough

It's not really inconsistent at all — the 'instructions' refer to the sections within the QED pages, ie, the Help Wanted panel, the Help Supplied section (it's not always immediately obvious if the tip refers specifically to an earlier query), and the general tips columns.

Besides, we don't REALLY throw readers letters in the bin; it just means they reach the right people more quickly.

We get an almighty amount of post each day at PC Review, filed in multifarious pigeon-holes, and the less time we spend sorting it out into its precise categories, the more time we can spend putting the magazine together. Er ... nobody else seems to be finding it as much of a problem as you evidently do.

Trekking on

Being a keen Star Trek fan I was delighted to see the Star Trek 25th anniversary game for a PC on the market.

I immediately bought the game and was pleasantly surprised to find the graphics and sound effects were of high quality.

I played the game for hours on end and was bitterly disappointed when the game came to an abrupt end. I was wondering if there are any plans for more missions or if a next generation game is forthcoming.

Mark Ega
Santry, Dublin

Star Letter

CD Strike, please

What are the software companies' plans regarding the release of new software titles simultaneously on CD-ROM as well as floppy disk? I am prompted to ask this by the release of Strike Commander by Origin, which requires no less than 35Mb of hard-disk space, and a further 7Mb for the speech pack!

Having been playing The 7th Guest from Virgin games on CD-ROM for a couple of weeks now I have come to appreciate the way that CD-ROM based software can be of an enormous size yet take up only a few megabytes of hard-disk space.

Hard-disk space has always been of a premium to most users and so I am using Dos 6 and DoubleSpace to give me as much room as possible, but the apparent inability of Strike Commander to run with disk compression programs means that I will not be purchasing it.

Full marks to Origin for stating this clearly on the box, but perhaps it would have included compression software in DOS since many more users will be in the same position as myself.

All my other software runs quite happily under DoubleSpace, including X-Wing, Formula One Grand Prix, Ultima Underworld II and Comanche Maximum Overkill, so I cannot believe that it would have been beyond Origin's capabilities to enable its software to do likewise.

It will become increasingly annoying to have to delete software from my hard disk to make room for new games when I have a CD-ROM drive capable of holding several hundred megabytes waiting for software houses to realise that it can be a straight forward alternative medium, just as the 3.5" disk was to the 5.25".

Gordon Hibbert
Penryn
Cornwall

Indeed there are. See this month's feature on the Summer Consumer Electronics Show for details (starts page 26), but there is a 25th Anniversary follow-up called Star Trek: Judgement Rites coming out from Interplay later this year, and Spectrum Holobyte also has a separate Star Trek Next Generation game in the works.

Marital strife

Could you please tell me how I am going to explain to my wife that the computer I made her life a misery for only four months ago now seems to be not good enough? Let me elaborate.

I have had a computer since 1982, first the trusty old 48K Spectrum, and then the Atari 520 STFM. Both machines lasted me for five years. Any game which I bought for either of them always worked just fine. Since the middle of 1992 I've put my wife through hell trying to persuade her to let me upgrade to a PC and finally, in January, I managed to bring her round to my way of thinking.

Clutching my £1,400 or so, I went for a 386/33 with 4Mb memory, 1Mb SVGA card, 120Mb hard disk, and a CD-ROM. Now I'm not rich by any stretch of the imagination, and to buy my computer I have had to go without beer and curries for quite a while, yet already I feel that I've misspent my hard-earned wedge of money.

I got my machine thinking I had all the games covered but, alas, I was wrong. Looking at some of the games displayed in the shops, a 486 is usually recommended, Strike Commander needs 8Mb of RAM to run at its best and The 7th Guest needs a fast SVGA card to run at its best.

Even my copy of MS-DOS 5 is now out of date. Please, where does it all stop?

Now I'm all for technology and progress, but please, software companies, as a personal favour to me, and to prevent another divorce statistic, keep it basic for another few months.

George Green
Toothill, Swindon

Manual importance

I have only recently discovered the joys of PC ownership, and one thing I would like to mention is software packaging.

It may seem unimportant compared to the game itself, but one of my main reasons for buying a PC was the quality of the game as a whole, including the packaging.

So imagine my amazement when I was saw my friend's X-Wing game, which looked so great that I grabbed my dosh and went to buy it, and then I got some crappy bits of paper which looked as though they were photocopied.

Why LucasArts did not put the Farlander Papers in all the games is beyond me, as without them the manuals are pathetic.

All I ask is that software companies keep their standards high: that means paying attention to the manuals as well as game.

As for Electronic Arts, let's hope it lets Origin use its old boxes and not the weak EA crap.

Paul Mcleod
Plymouth, Devon

Version updates

Help! I have the feeling that I am being taken for a ride and I am writing firstly, to warn other PC Review readers not to make the mistakes I have, and secondly, I am writing in the hope that you can provide some

help and maybe restore my sense of justice in the world.

While recently perusing one of my local software shops I saw two of the games in the V for Victory series, namely Velikiye Luki and Market Garden.

I had heard good things about this series of computer war games and was seized by the sudden urge to buy them both. Once installed, I was very pleased with them, but felt they were slightly overpriced.

Having decided that I would like the other game in the series (Utah Beach), I ordered it from Premier Mail Order of Basildon; in doing so I specifically asked for version 2.0 of the game (instructions provided with the Market Garden game indicated that only version 2.0 of Utah Beach could be integrated under the new common interface).

Utah Beach duly arrived and was installed, but oh dear, this was version 1.1. Mistake number one; instead of returning the game to Premier and demanding that it send me what had been ordered, I decided to save on postage and time and telephone the distributors, Electronic Arts, for the upgrade.

"Hello, I'd like the upgrade to version 2.0 of Utah Beach, please."

"Oh yes sir, that'll be £7.50."

"Er, no, you misunderstand. I've only just bought this game."

"Oh, I'm sorry sir. Versions prior to 2.0 were not distributed by EA and, therefore free upgrades are not available."

"Yes, but I've only bought this game a day or so ago ..."

Mistake number two; I gave in and purchased the upgrade, instead of trying to get Premier to send me what I had wanted.

Only after I finished on the telephone did the absurdity of the situation strike me; if you go out and buy Utah Beach today, it is pot luck whether you get version 2.0 or not (there is no version marked on the packaging).

The lady at Electronic Arts even had the nerve to tell me this situation was just like that with Harpoon distribution; nice to see the games industry is learning from its mistakes.

And the lesson from this? If you are buying V for Victory – Utah Beech, *make sure you get version 2.0*, otherwise, the game will probably cost you £7.50 more than you anticipated.

Tony Wood
Camberley, Surrey

Competition winners

Sports Days (Issue 18)

We had a bumper batch of premium sporting days out on offer to four prizewinners in this competition run in conjunction with Empire Software. Martin Harrison, of Tadworth, Surrey, wins the day out at The Belfry; David Asher, of Wembley, Middlesex, is off to Brands Hatch; Robert Marshall, of Heanor, Derbyshire, will be playing tennis at the Riverside Racket Club, and Graham Knight, of St Albans, is on his way to Wembley. Furthermore, five runners-up each get a copy of Empire's Sports Masters compilation: Nick Bansback, of Leighton Buzzard; J D Hinshill, of Newport, Shropshire; Neil Mahoney, of Formby, Merseyside; Mr K Sherwood, of Crawley, West Sussex, and Steve Tarrant, of Poole, Dorset.

And just in case anyone is still stumped by the questions, the answers were: 1) The USA currently holds the Ryder Cup; 2) Boris Becker became the youngest ever winner of the Wimbledon Men's Singles title in 1985; 3) the last British winner of the Formula One Drivers' Championship before Mansell was James Hunt, and, 4) the 1996 European Football Championship is due to take place in England (!).

ON THE SPOT

PC Review arranges regular visits to the UK's top PC companies, taking with us a selection of readers who have filled in the form below. This gives you the chance to talk to various movers and shakers within the industry: interview them, ask them about their PC plans, how they design, write, produce their games, what they hope to be doing in the future. The exact nature of the visit, and the degree of formality, depends on the companies concerned, but you usually get a chance to see some sneak previews of forthcoming products, meet the programmers, and have a guided tour of company HQ.

A full report of the visit then appears in a later PC Review – useful for those who didn't go, because they'll read the answers to the questions you asked. In other words, the issues which you, the readers, care about, rather than we t hink is important.

We're currently planning a second trip to Electronic Arts, and we've added the company to the list below. If you want to visit a company other than those mentioned below, tell us, and if there's enough interest we'll try to arrange it.

If you want to take part in an On the Spot visit, fill in the form below and send it to: On the Spot, PC Review, Priory Court, 30-32 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

Note: we don't take very many people at any one time, so that if selected, you'll have every chance to have your say. Because of this, the places get filled quickly, but we'll be doing return visits to all the most popular companies. If you miss out the first time round, sit tight, because another visit to the same place will come up and we don't throw your forms away.

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Age: Under 16 ❑ 16-25 ❑ 25-40 ❑ Over 40 ❑

NB if you are under 16, please get your parent or guardian to sign this form as well giving their consent for you to take part.

Which company would you like to visit?
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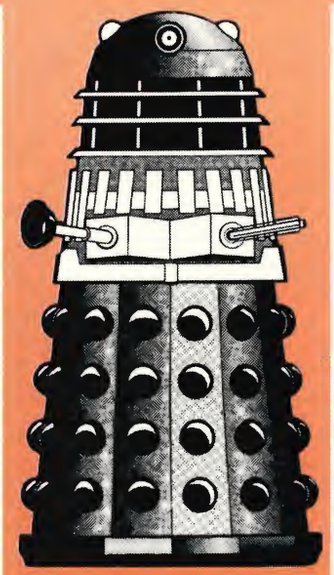

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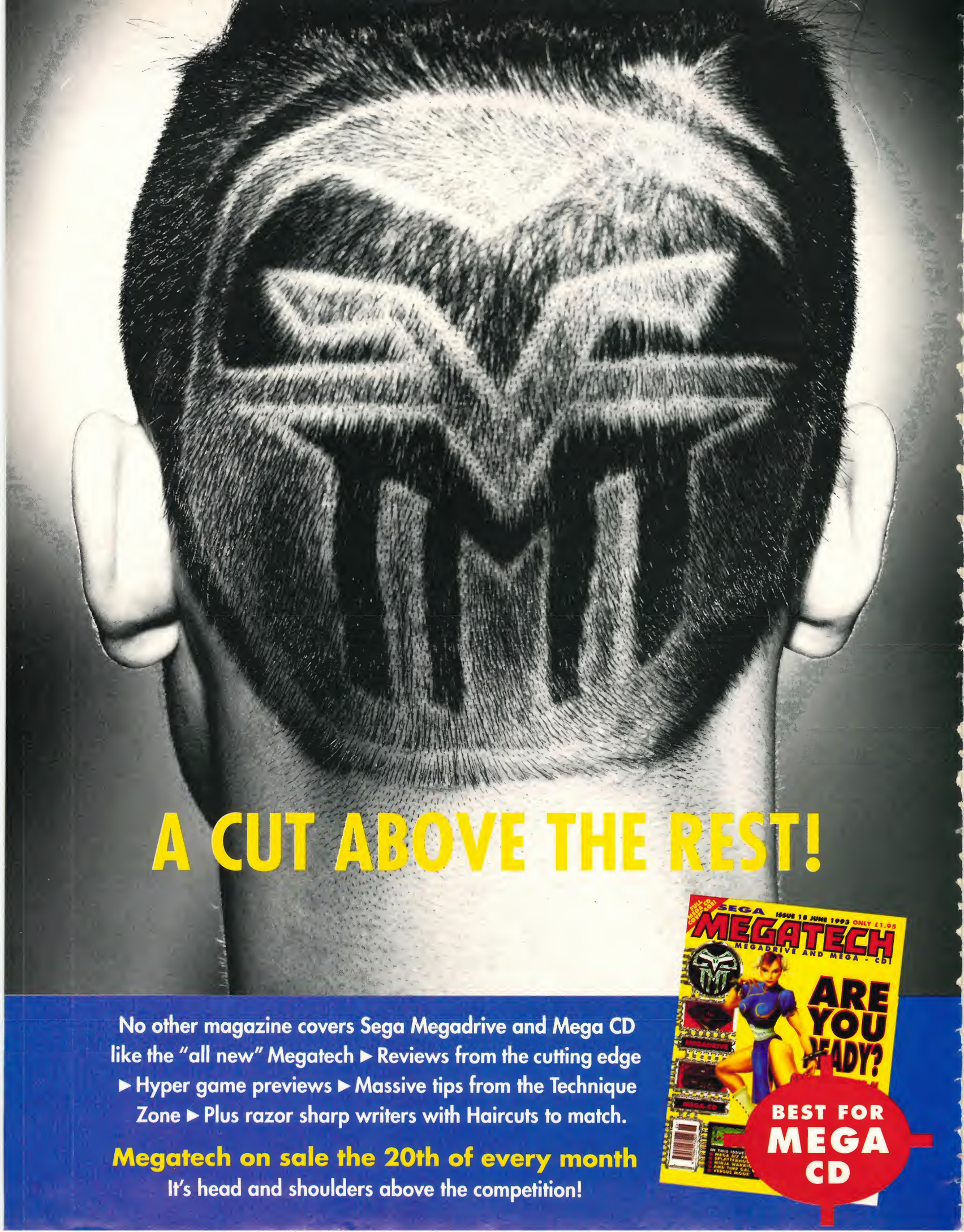

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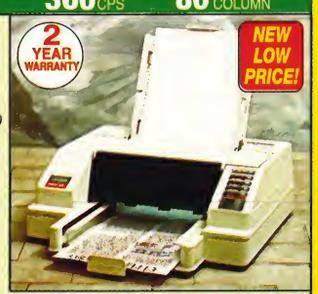

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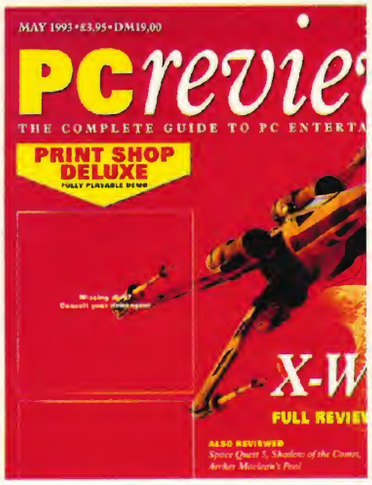

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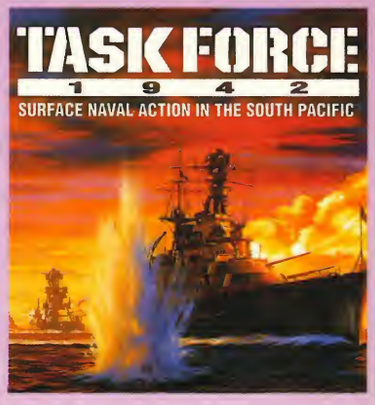

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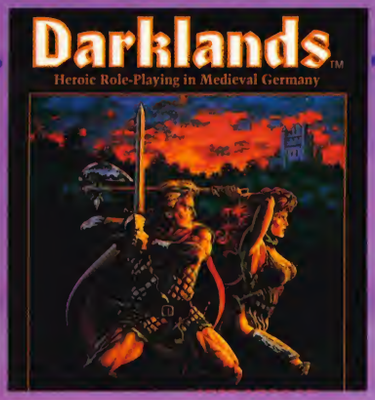

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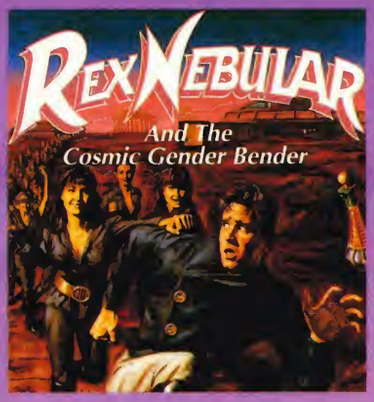

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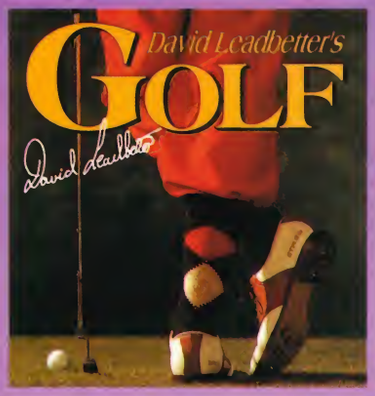

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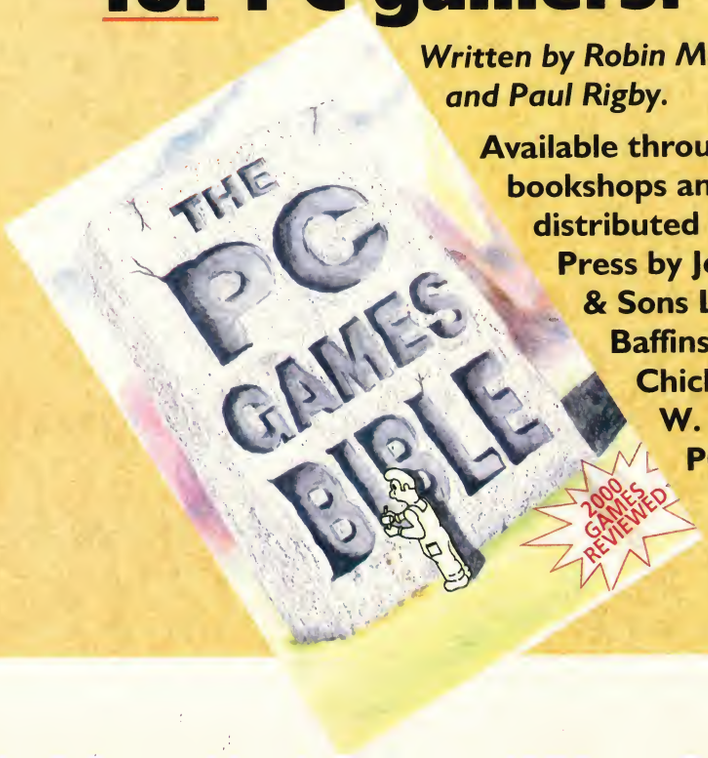

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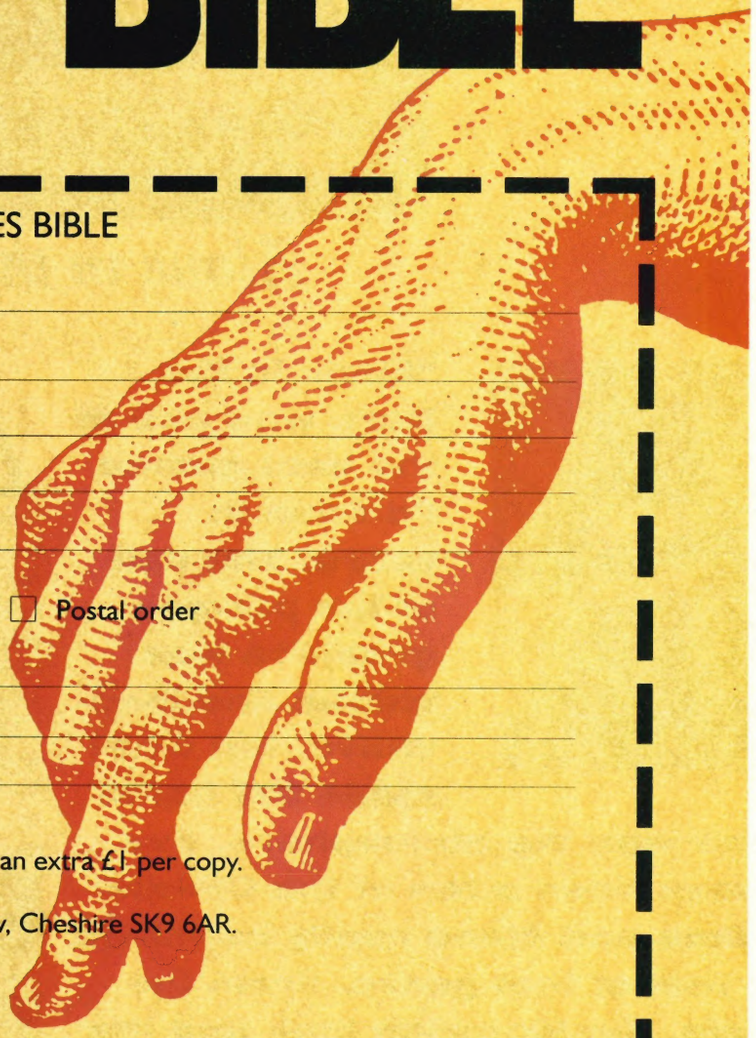

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Brian Fargo's *Classic* GAME OF THE MONTH

Alone in the Dark

"Alone in the Dark was one of the best games I'd seen in years. The use of the polygon graphics was unique and innovative, but what made the game shine was the atmosphere. I've always been a fan of the Cthulhu mythos and Alone really captured the feel of that genre. From the music, the Victorian look and the inhuman howling, it all came together seamlessly."

Alone in the Dark is a graphic adventure 'inspired' by the Cthulhu novels of H P Lovecraft. The action takes place in the rambling mansion of the late Jeremy Hartwood, with the player taking the part either of private detective Edward Carnby, or of Hartwood's niece Emily, investigating his death. You soon discover that the house is haunted, with all manner of ghouls, zombies and things that go bump in the night out for your blood, or at least out to scare you out of your wits. As you explore the rooms, you'll pick up objects along the way which will prove useful in later stages, but this is largely an action game, requiring you to defeat and despatch the ghouls in turn. As well as surviving the horrors of the house itself, there are also cellars and dungeons to be braved.

The 3D filled polygon graphics are used to good effect to portray the 1920s look of the house and its contents, while the atmosphere of suspense and horror is built up through sound effects, and the cutting between different camera angles, so that you are never quite sure just what you might meet around the next corner.

PROFILE

Brian Fargo is the founder of Interplay Productions, publisher of Battlechess, Star Trek: 25th Anniversary, and Castles, among many other titles in its ten year history. He began by programming himself in 1979, before setting up Interplay four years later, with the aim of taking a 'studio' approach to developing software — bringing together programmers, artists, musicians and directors on a single project. Based in Irvine, just south of Los Angeles, the company has forged close links with nearby Hollywood right from the start. Currently, Interplay is working on a number of multimedia titles, using professional actors and digitised backdrops for speech, graphics and animation, as well as more conventional disk-based games.

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